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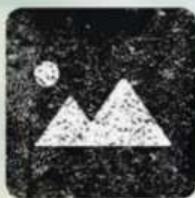
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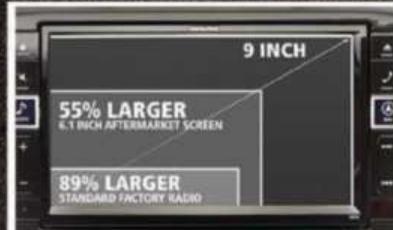
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# R BIG ADVENTURES

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DECEMBER 2015

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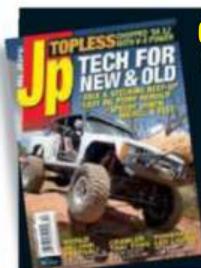
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**ON THE COVER**  
Neal Hancock has built plenty of rigs, but his topless '84 XJ with LQ9 power and 1-ton axles is his pride and joy. See the full story on page 26.



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# TRAIL HEAD

**Among Jeeps** there are always discussions about what brand of part is better for this purpose or that, or who makes a better tire, or what vintage of CJ-7 is best for building up, or which trail is the most challenging, or who is the better driver within a club or group of friends. All of these can lead to heated discussions, otherwise known as arguments. Occasionally, and quite sadly, these arguments lead to events that terminate friendships that have survived other differences of opinion for decades. It's truly tragic, especially when you consider, as far as I am concerned, that off-roading (and especially the love of Jeeps) is one of the things that have always seemed to bring together people of all sorts of backgrounds, professions, creed, color, and walks of life.

However, when the discussion turns to whether it is better, or the vehicle more legitimate, or the owner more or less a Jeeper, because their rig was built or bought, it seems as if the discussion immediately goes from cool to boiling hot. There are those who just can't abide a Jeep that was not completely built by the owner. Here's our take on this hot-button subject.

Sure we love to see highly customized Jeeps that the owner has spent some serious time creating, configuring, cutting on, welding to, and characterizing to his or her exact desires and needs. The perfect example of this type of totally customized rig can be found on pages 26-28 in this very issue of *Jp*. Neal Hancock began with a stock '84 Jeep Cherokee XJ, and through extensive fabrication and the use of beefy axles, a multi-link suspension system, and an LQ9 V-8, turned it into a one-of-a-kind, extended-wheelbase chariot of rockcrawling prowess.

However, some of us just can't spare the time to build up the Jeep we want. Some don't have the skills. We'll continue to meet plenty of very nice people who love the Jeep lifestyle of attending and participating in trail runs but simply can't, or choose not to, spend whatever free time they have

in the garage wrenching away to modify their own rigs.

Among these are men and women who are architects, business owners, teachers, and corporate executives who already must put in 50, 60, or 70 hours a week at their workplace in order to get the job done. Also among those are men and women who feel it's more important to spend the nights or days they are free with their family instead of upgrading the engine or swapping in new axles on their Jeep. In addition, we have met handicapped or injured men and women (in particular, military veterans) who are avid off-roaders and outstanding drivers but who simply can't physically do the mechanical work.

Of course, we believe that whether or not you built, bought, or did something in between, it's best to know and understand the basic systems of your Jeep—or at least be on your way to learning about them. As well, we are not fond of those who purchase gaudy clown-car 4x4s festooned with gee-gaws who know nothing about the rig they are driving. However, to demand that every member of the Jeep fraternity (or sorority) be a master mechanic is not a place we're prepared to go. Where do you weigh in on this debate? Built? Bought? Somewhere in-between? Tell us all about it at [jpeditor@jpmagazine.com](mailto:jpeditor@jpmagazine.com).

—Stuart Bourdon

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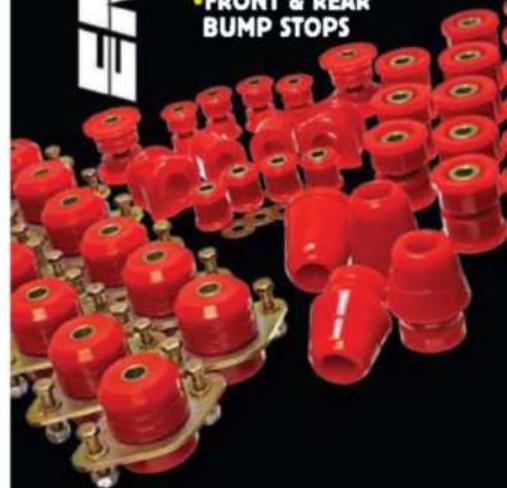
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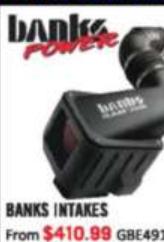
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# MAILBAG

By John Cappa  
jpeditor@jpmagazine.com



## Best Issue Ever

The Aug. '15 issue was the absolute best Jp issue ever. You have all the other four-wheel-drive mags beat forever!

Jeffrey J. Adams  
Via email

## Dear Bob

This is an open letter to Bob Davis whose rant about the General Tire advertising was printed in the Aug. '15 Mailbag section of Jp.

Bob,

Kindly get a life. It's an ad, for crying out loud. I have been to the salt flats outside of Wendover, Nevada, and depending on the season and condition of the salt, any type of tire can be used on it. I encourage you to do some research on it. I saw some crazy wrecks on the salt during Speed Week in August 2007 and 2009. The vehicles were using those non-aggressive tires of which you are a proponent. And whoops—the cars spun out at over 100 mph. I'm not saying that's typical, nor that the guys running on the salt flats need to race in 4WD Jeeps or with aggressive tires, but don't think that traction is a given.

As far as how the model in the ad is attired, again, it's an ad that's obviously alluding to a Resident Evil/zombie apocalypse sort of survival environment. It's a fictional genre that has permeated our culture.

Maybe you don't like survival-fiction, but there are plenty of people out there that think this stuff is cool and build their vehicles to withstand the whole scene. Is it reality? No. But it does allow advertisers to appeal to the imagination of these people and their taste for adventure. So it makes money and the people who want their Jeeps to be movie props instead of hardcore rockcrawlers or prerunners are free to spend their money as foolishly as they please.

And, Bob, don't look now, but the ad for Pitbull Tires on page 12 of the same

issue that holds your immortalized critique shows a cutely attired girl sitting on a 44-inch Pitbull Rocker tire, mounted on a modified modern Jeep that sports a paint job evocative of a USAAC plane from WWII. Also, at least one old WW2 aerial bomb seems to be mounted to the rear quarter panel, and there are twin Gatling guns mounted on the hood. I can't wait to read your critique of this one.

Jp staff: Thanks for making Jp possible, but we still need more fullsize stuff. Maybe an article on how to do a cheap NP241C transfer case swap (without spending \$1,000 in adapters and slip-yoke eliminator kits or swapping axles) in a '74-'79 Quadra-Trac SJ. Or do a feature/review of the new Ramsey-built Quadra-Trac drive chains now being sold at BJ's Off-Road. Somebody at Jp has to have an old BW1339 rig. I know Hazel did.

Matthew W.  
Via email



## Tempting

I saw the CJ-10A story ("Jeep Encyclopedia") in the Aug. '15 issue. I have one of these worthless things. If you would like to do a build on one, I will give it to the magazine. I have had it for 10 to 15 years, and I am downsizing. That's just a nice way of saying I am getting rid of Jeep crap. I also have a Gamma Goat that I'd like to find a home for. I wheeled with a gentleman from Canada who was in *Four Wheeler's* Top Truck Challenge many years ago. He had a Jeep that had narrowed axles from a Goat and independent front and rear suspension. Thanks for letting me babble.

John Reininghaus  
Via email

Thanks for the offer. Both vehicles are tempting, but we're gonna have to pass. The guy you wheeled with was Geby Wager. He runs a shop called Creative Motor Sports ([gocms.com](http://gocms.com)). The company offers front and rear independent adjustable airbag suspensions and axles for Jeeps and other 4x4s. His Jeep was way before its time in 1997, when he entered Top Truck Challenge. More recently, he attended the 20-year anniversary of Top Truck Challenge and brought the same Jeep with relatively few alterations.

## Rare LJ

Just the other day I was driving down the highway and saw an Electric Lime Green



LJ. That got me thinking: What are the production numbers for some of the rare new model Jeeps? I have a '06 yellow LJ that has a very late 2006 date code. Could it be the last yellow LJ to roll off the line?

The same day, in almost the same spot, I was traveling the opposite direction and saw another Electric Lime Green LJ with half doors!

I'm not a simpleton. I understand that people paint things, but that seems to be a super rare Jeep at a quick glance.

I would love to see a story about actual production numbers of some of the more recent Jeeps and a breakdown of color and model, just to cure a common curiosity. I bet that Electric Lime Green LJ is one of the rarest.

John P. Quirin  
Via email

Using the term "rare" to describe modern Jeeps that you can still find for sale fairly regularly can be a little misleading. I wouldn't really call the '04-'06 Jeep Wrangler Unlimited (LJ) rare. Uncommon is probably more accurate. There were about 47,000 of them built, including the Rubicon models. Although, I'll concede that they are certainly more sought after than the standard Wrangler of the same era. By comparison, about 27,000 Jeep CJ-8 Scramblers were built. I'm not sure I would call those rare either. The "real rare" modern Jeeps are the gaudy special-edition packages like the '03 Rubicon Tomb Raider Edition, '04 Willys Edition, '04 Columbia Edition, '06 Golden Eagle Edition, and the '06 65th Anniversary Edition Willys Wrangler. Typically, fewer than 1,600 of each of these were offered. As far as your Jeep being the last off the line, it's hard to say. I hate to burst your bubble, but I wouldn't get too excited about it. It wouldn't increase the value any.

## Jp Project Pondering

I am working on a multi-year '55 Willys pickup project. Naturally, I've been following your "Wicked Willys" articles. After reading the Aug. '15 issue, I got to thinking and wondering about what you do with the project Jeeps when you're done with them. Do they get sold, donated, or dismantled for other projects? Is there any chance a regular guy like me could acquire such a novel machine?

Craig Jantz  
Via email



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The project vehicles you read about in Jp are usually owned by the contributors and some are owned by Jp. What happens to them depends on the project and the owner. More often than not, they are tested, driven regularly and abused. Once we are through with them, there often isn't much left of any real value. Sometimes they get parted out for other projects and sometimes they are sold for funds to move into the next project. We like to keep a variety of different Jeeps around, and once a Jeep has lost its editorial value, it usually moves on to the next owner. However,

there are some cases where a project sticks around for many years. So there really is no set rule. Unfortunately, the Wicked Willys isn't for sale. And knowing Verne Simons, that thing will take a beating when it's completed. You probably won't want it once he's through with it.

### KL Designation

You've been able to answer my questions in the past, so here is another one: What is the designation for my new '15 Jeep Cherokee Trailhawk? I found the KL as a possibility for the Cherokees but does that also apply to the Trailhawk? Also, what's the deal with lifting a Trailhawk? I guess if it comes down to it, I can always drive my lifted '01 TJ.

Jim Smith  
Via email

The '14-current Jeep Cherokee's internal designation is KL. The Trailhawk model is simply a derivative of the KL, similar to the Limited or Latitude package, and doesn't carry a different designation. I know what you're thinking: Why does the '04-'06 Jeep Wrangler Unlimited carry its own designation as an LJ instead of a TJ? Way back when, we found a build tag on the frameral of a '04 Jeep Wrangler Unlimited. That tag had a designation of LJ in the same place a short '04 Wrangler had the TJ designation. In a way, we sort of started that myth. The fact of the matter is that there was no LJ designation ever used internally at Jeep. However, no one could ever really explain to us why the LJ is on the build tags of the Unlimited models and not on the standard Wrangler model. Anyway, you simply have a KL, which is the official Jeep internal designation for your Cherokee Trailhawk.

As for a lift, I think you should probably stick with the TJ if you want to drive something lifted. Your Trailhawk already has a slight lift above the other Cherokee models. Unfortunately, the suspension

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and chassis design isn't all that cost-effective to create a lift kit for. It has been estimated that a 1 to 2-inch lift would cost \$1,000-\$2,000 for parts alone because new adjustable lower control arms would have to be developed for proper alignment.

### Disposable Hero Hurrah

I really liked the "Disposable Hero" build stories from the past couple issues. I have an XJ of my own, have owned several, and I am sure my body count will grow as I do. Many of the parts from my original '96 are still on my current '95. I

started with a '96 4.0L HO XJ with an AW4 transmission and an NP241 transfer case. I installed a 4½-inch Rubicon Express short-arm lift and some 31-inch BFG All-Terrain tires. I rolled it and bought a '93. I swapped some parts, cut the fenders, and stepped up to some 33-inch BFG Mud-Terrain tires. I learned to weld (poorly) on the '93 by building an exo-cage, and then proceeded to run the '93 into the ground.

I pulled my current '95 from a front yard in Kings Beach, California, under the agreement that if I haul it away, it was mine! After 6 to 8 months, a transmission



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4"	Long Arm Suspension	\$1599.95
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		1999-2004 WJ Grand Cherokee
2"	Coil Spacer Kit w/N2.0 Shocks	\$249.95
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4"	X-series w/X-Flex Arms	\$799.95 - \$749.95
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Adjustable Front Trac Bar (3"-6")	\$129.95

### SUSPENSION

		1993-1998 ZJ Grand Cherokee
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\*4-door models +\$30



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TJ / YJ Front Stubby Winch	\$279.95
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# DISPATCH

By Tori Tellem  
jpeditor@jmpmagazine.com



## Jeep News & Rumors

- The results of the 20th-annual Total Quality Index are in, and the Jeep Wrangler Unlimited scored at the top of the entry-SUV segment. What does that mean? The TQI, as total-quality hipsters call it, compiles feedback from more than 46,000 owners of new 2015 model-year vehicles and asks 155-plus questions to gauge how that ownership is going. As well, this is the first time Fiat Chrysler ranked the highest among all automakers in the TQI.
- More satisfaction: The Grand Cherokee got the highest spot in the midsize-SUV category for the fifth time in a row from AutoPacific and its Vehicle Satisfaction Awards. How it goes about gathering what's needed for this ranking is similar to what you read above.
- What does \$280 million get you? Well, if you're Fiat/Chrysler and invest it in the manufacturing joint venture Fiat India

## Reader Quote Without Story\*

\*As seen on Jp's Facebook page



**Harry Berman** First myth is "4.0 will run forever"  
Like · Reply · 2 · July 18 at 1:09pm



Automobiles Private Limited with Tata Motors Unlimited, then it gets you support in the production of a new Jeep being produced in the second quarter of 2017.

- October 10, 2015, is the 3rd annual Jeep on the Rocks concert at the Red Rocks Amphitheatre in Colorado. The show is headlined by Panic! at the Disco, and if that's not worth the price of admission alone, then know that there's also special VIP parking for Jeep owners. To get a seat, go to [ajs.com](http://www.ajs.com).
- A world record was set at the '15 Bantam Jeep Heritage Festival, to the tune of 2,420 Jeeps in a parade? Besting the previous Guinness World Record of 1,846?



## What a Jeep Made of Cans Looks Like

Jeep, the FCA Foundation, Construction, and students got together in Vancouver, B.C., to celebrate Canada Day by building a life-size replica of the Jeep Wrangler using more than 4,500 cans of food. The food went to the Greater Vancouver Food Bank Society.



## Quote Without Story

**"I think the overall styling, the overall shape, the overall accommodation of that vehicle is spot-on. I don't think that there's anything that dramatically needs to change with that vehicle going forward."**

—Head of Jeep, Mike Manley, regarding the significance of the redo on the Grand Cherokee for mid-2016, according to *Automotive News*



## Industry News

- The American Expedition Vehicles AEV Prospector takes a Ram and gives it even more of an off-road presence, implementing the company's unique 3-inch DualSport suspension, front bumper, and wheels. Also on tap are special headrests, badging, and a painted grille and rear bumper. Learn more at [aev-conversions.com](http://aev-conversions.com).
- Weld held a wheel-design contest. The winner was a Kansas City Art Institute student, who nabbed \$1,000 in the inaugural competition, which was open
- to all students enrolled in the virtual sculpture design program at the 'tute.
- Hella's got [myhellalights.com](http://myhellalights.com) if you're in the mood for an online guide to lamps, lights, and bulbs.
- Borla and Alphabet Energy are working on a next-gen exhaust system: the first aftermarket thermoelectric fuel-efficiency product for internal-combustion engines. In other words, it would grab waste heat and use it to improve fuel efficiency via lowering alternator load or even dumping the alternator altogether.

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## DISPATCH

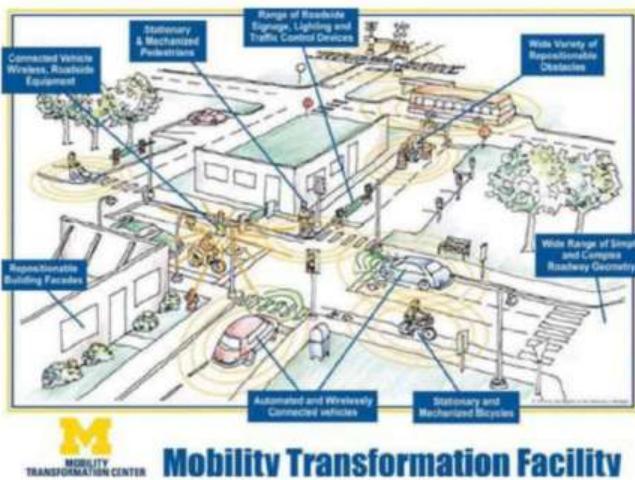
### 2015 Off-Road Motorsports Hall of Fame

The newest inductees to the Off-Road Motorsports Hall of Fame are Shannon Campbell (rockcrawling/racing), Chris Collard (journalist), Michael Gaughan (racer and team sponsor), Curt LeDuc (racer), and Jerry Penhall (racer and fabricator).



### What is Mcity?

Like them or leave them, autonomous vehicles are getting their 15 minutes of fame, and the University of Michigan's Mobility Transformation Center has dedicated 32 acres to the cause. Mcity simulates the real world with multi-lane roads, curves and ramps, different road surfaces such as dirt and asphalt, and tunnels. Plus, there are traffic-control devices, crosswalks, bike lanes, buildings, and more to allow for testing automated and connected vehicles.



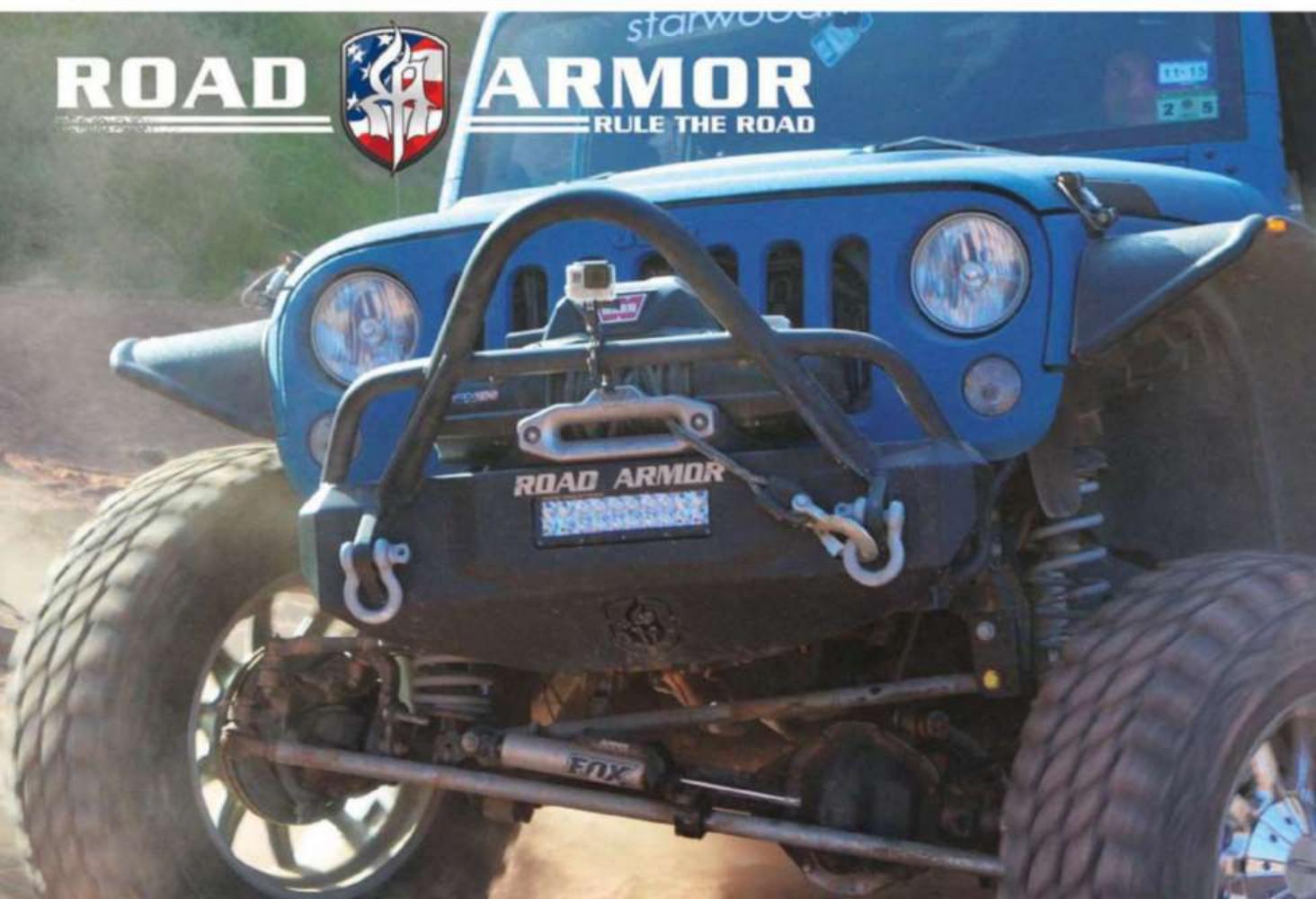
**Mobility Transformation Facility**

Mobility Transformation Center



### Auto Graphs

- Nissan is the top-selling Asian brand in Europe.
- Nissan gets name-checked again: If you see the Tennessee Titans on their home turf in Nashville, you'll be at the Nissan Stadium.
- Volvo is doing a lifetime parts and labor warranty. It'll be offered for all Volvos serviced after the factory warranty. Volvo said customers can expect to pay once, then never again, for replacement parts and labor.
- The Unimog is coming back to Canada? What about US?
- SEMA pointed out that President Obama's move to designate three new national monuments could potentially restrict new roads or trails and will require a new land-management plan equaling more road closures. SEMA is opposed to the designations, which include the Basin and



Range National Monument in Nevada, Berryessa Snow Mountain Monument in Northern California, and Waco National Monument in Texas.

- The Senate approved an amendment in a transportation bill that requires rental cars to be grounded and repaired before being rented if there's an open safety recall.
- It's now legal in Tennessee to break into cars to save animals. Searching for the owner and letting law enforcement



know what you're going to do is required. It's part of the Good Samaritan law that already allows for breaking in to save children.

- The 900 lb-ft of torque crown goes to the '16 Ram HD and its Cummins 6.7L.
- The '16 Chevy Silverado 1500 has an all-new look.

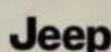
### Quote Without Story 2

**"Well-known hackers Charlie Miller and Chris Valasek recently teamed up with a WIRED reporter to publish a story that you may have read about or seen on the news. The story highlights how Miller and Valasek hacked into Miller's '14 Jeep Cherokee and remotely controlled some functions. Miller and Valasek have been working on intentionally hacking into Miller's vehicle over the past year as part of their ongoing research in the area of automotive cybersecurity and have communicated with FCA about some aspects of their work. To FCA's knowledge, there has not been a single real-world incident of an unlawful or unauthorized remote hack into any FCA vehicle."**

—Blog statement from Fiat Chrysler



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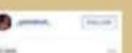


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Pep Boys @pepboysauto - Jul 20

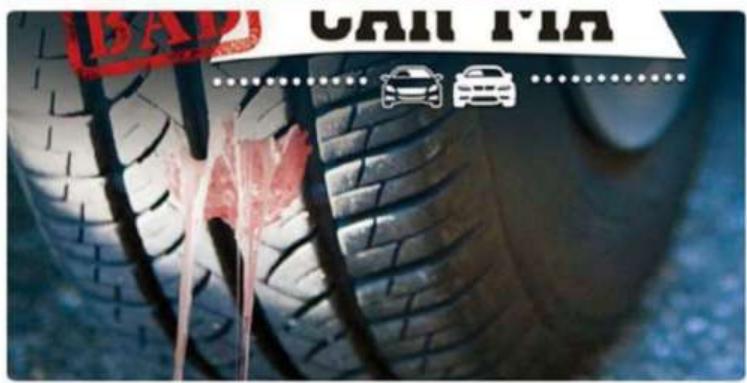
The only thing that throwing gum out the window will get you is bad 'car'ma. #BadCARma #Cars #Karma #PetPeeves



Instagram: @\_yalnizkurt\_



Instagram: @4xfredwilliams



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### Where the Jeeps Are

Have an event? Let us know! Remember the magazine needs about four months of notice. Just follow these steps:

- Name of event:
- Date(s) of event:
- City/State of event:
- Venue for event:
- Website for readers to learn more about your event:
- Why your event is cool in five words or less:
- Have a high-resolution photo from a previous event? Feel free to send it to us and we might just include it.
- Send the info and photo to: [jpeditor@jpmagazine.com](mailto:jpeditor@jpmagazine.com)
- Make your subject line: Where the Jeeps Are

### Fall Midwest Willys Reunion & Swap Meet

September 18-20  
Jefferson City, Missouri  
[midwestwillysreunion.org](http://midwestwillysreunion.org)  
"Celebrate our 20th reunion."

### Australian Jeep Jamboree 2015

October 1-5  
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[jeppjamboree2015.com.au](http://jeppjamboree2015.com.au)  
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### Crawling for a Cure

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Help us put together our Sideways department! Send us stories and photos for:

**Jeep Chix:** We want to see you or your gal or some gal you know with a Jeep. Give us her name, the circumstances, the situation—the details.

**Stuck/Flopped/Rolled:** How come none of you are sending us photos and stories for this version of Sideways? Are you all staying on baby trails? Where are photos of cool carnage and stuck Jeeps?

**Vintage and Military Jeeps:** We like old-timey and military things. Please us with a pic, story, names, Jeep.

In addition to the words, here are the photo requirements:

- Maximum-quality JPEG, BMP, or TIFF file.
- No less than 1,600 by 1,200 pixels (about 2 megapixels).
- No PDFs or other formats. We just can't use them in the magazine.
- Email the materials to [jpeditor@jpmagazine.com](mailto:jpeditor@jpmagazine.com) with the subject line: Sideways. ☺

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**Neal Hancock** has owned a handful of off-road rigs over the years, including a CJ-5

and a rock buggy he built. His build formula has typically been to install V-8 power on a stretched wheelbase with 1-ton axles and big tires. When it was time to build a new rig to accommodate his family, he wanted to stick with an open-top configuration but with added seating capacity.

He went about the build a bit unconventionally by taking a '84 XJ Cherokee and chopping the entire top off, leaving only the windshield. The entire vehicle was gutted and came another one of those torquey V-8s, a stout drivetrain, linked suspension, 37-inch tires, and a whole lot of fabrication and massaging

of metal. In the end, Neal got another capable rig with full seating for four. It sees regular use in the Arizona desert and in the sands of Mexico.

#### Chassis

As we all know, the Jeep XJ is a Unitbody design, so to accommodate the linked suspension and drivetrain Hancock wanted, he had to supplement the existing chassis structure. He started with a pair of C-ROK Rock Skins to protect the rockers, and he then further plated these to the factory Unitbody in order to provide a platform on which to weld link mounts to hang his own suspension.

Up front is a custom 3-link with track bar attached to the axle using a modified Blue Torch Fab truss. 14-inch-stroke, 2½-inch bore Sway-A-Way Racerunner

coilovers support the front of the rig and 4-inch-stroke, 2-inch bore nitrogen bumpstops halt the upward travel of the axle. The rear triangulated 4-link also uses 14-inch travel Racerunner coilovers. All four coilovers are attached to mounts tied into the cage under the hood or at the tail of the rig, and each carries a remote reservoir. The wheelbase has been stretched to 104 inches.

#### Drivetrain

The factory drivetrain was completely eliminated and Hancock started from scratch with a solid powerplant. He filled the gaping hole under the hood with a GM LQ9 6.0L Vortec V-8 salvaged from a '05 Cadillac Escalade with an LS6 intake and injectors. However, before it was slipped between the frame rails, it



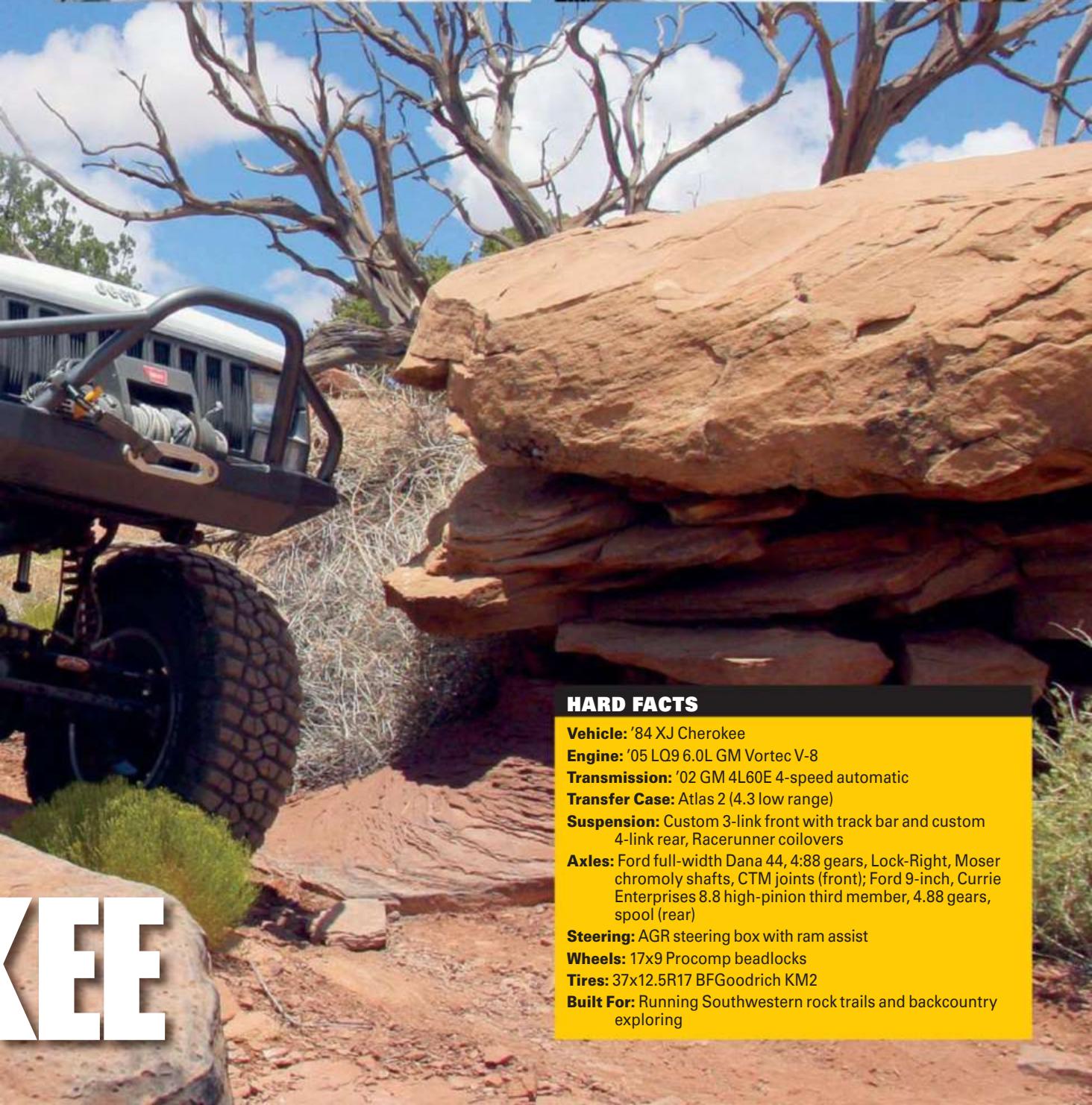
**An XJ with an altered personality**

By Jay Kopycinski

[jpmeditor@jpmagazine.com](mailto:jpmeditor@jpmagazine.com)

Photography: Jay Kopycinski

# TOPLESS CHEROKEE



## HARD FACTS

**Vehicle:** '84 XJ Cherokee

**Engine:** '05 LQ9 6.0L GM Vortec V-8

**Transmission:** '02 GM 4L60E 4-speed automatic

**Transfer Case:** Atlas 2 (4.3 low range)

**Suspension:** Custom 3-link front with track bar and custom 4-link rear, Racerunner coilovers

**Axles:** Ford full-width Dana 44, 4:88 gears, Lock-Right, Moser chromoly shafts, CTM joints (front); Ford 9-inch, Currie Enterprises 8.8 high-pinion third member, 4.88 gears, spool (rear)

**Steering:** AGR steering box with ram assist

**Wheels:** 17x9 Procomp beadlocks

**Tires:** 37x12.5R17 BFGoodrich KM2

**Built For:** Running Southwestern rock trails and backcountry exploring

REE

## TOPLESS CHEROKEE



was updated with a Competition Cams bump stick with aftermarket valve springs and pushrods. Hancock fabricated the stunning TIG-welded stainless exhaust headers from tube sections. The 1 $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch step headers efficiently route the exhaust gases from the engine, and they exit the tail of the Cherokee through a pair of Magnaflow mufflers. A K&N air intake was added as well, and the ECM was sourced from a '00 GM truck.

C-ROK frame-stiffener plates were added to beef up the chassis for the larger engine and to resist flex fatigue from trail use. A custom Ron Davis aluminum radiator helps keep the engine cool on the highway and when 'crawling on trails. Transmission of choice was a '02 GM 4L60E four-speed automatic, and it's shifted using a B&M Megashifter. From there, an Atlas 2 transfer case with a 4.3:1 low range is mated to the transmission using an Advance Adapters adapter.

Axle needs were addressed up front with a full-width Ford Dana 44. But first, it was modified with 4.88 gears, a Lock-Right, Moser chromoly shafts, and CTM joints. In the rear, the XJ got a Ford 9-inch with a Currie Enterprises 8.8 high-pinion third member, matching 4.88 gears, 35-spline shafts, and a spool.

Direction changes take place using an AGR steering box assisted with a 1-inch bore Surplus Center hydraulic ram. Finally, traction is provided with 5-lug Pro Comp beadlocks turning 37x12.5R17

BFGoodrich KM2 Mud Terrains. A matching spare sits on the tail of the rig on a custom carrier that lifts upward using gas struts to allow access to a cooler and a storage box below.

### Body and Interior

Hancock wanted to retain the street legal status of the XJ but improve visibility and gain the open-air feeling of a topless type rig. So out came the reciprocating saw and he lopped off most everything above the hood line, save for the windshield frame and windshield. He capped off the windshield frame and the top bodyline of the two-door Cherokee with sheetmetal. He even eliminated the doors for improved visibility and ease of access.

With a load of 1 $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch tubing and some time spent on a bender, he had the pieces to fabricate a full-length eight-point rollcage. He sparked the welder and burned the tube together, then plated it down to the floor to provide a safety 'cage for all occupants. An aluminum sheet roof provides further protection and shade. C-ROK bumpers front and rear provide armor and recovery points. Up front, a Warn HS9500i winch was added in case trail extraction is needed.

With the factory interior also stripped bare, Hancock applied Lizard Skin thermal barrier in place of the stock carpeting. A Renegade rear bench and front bucket seats were mounted to the rollcage tubes, as were the five-point safety

harnesses. The dash was also tossed and a custom replacement fabricated using aluminum sheet. It was stuffed with a compliment of Autometer gauges to monitor engine vitals. Hancock also bolted in a modified factory steering column and topped it off with a Grant steering wheel.

### Good, Bad, and What It's For

XJ Cherokees are plentiful and versatile, so the donor vehicle provided a good starting base. What they do lack is a body-on-frame design easily suitable for major suspension mods. Hancock wanted a rig that was much like a CJ, while maintaining the identity of a Cherokee. He ended up changing the entire powertrain and drivetrain, chopped the top, and reworked all the interior. Then he built his own suspension to arrive at a full four-passenger rig with plenty of power and the ability to competently tackle a variety of trails and play on the rocks. ☺

### Why I Wrote This Feature

Living in the Southwest means we have the luxury of running open-top rigs much of the year. Typically this is accomplished in a CJ, YJ, TJ, or JK. I like tastefully chopped-top SUVs, and Hancock did a great job of turning this XJ into an open rig that's fun on the street and awesome on the trail.

—Jay Kopycinski

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PHOTO BY Jim Speth Photography

# CURRIE BEEF



**Play in the dirt** long enough and you're going to break something. It's just a fact of

off-road life. Whether it's major or minor breakage depends largely on the driver, but things do happen when playing off-road. Compounding the matter is the fact that factory parts are generally known not to be the strongest. They are chosen to fit a certain price point within the vehicle's design parameters. What this means for the Jeeper is that we end up with parts that, while they can do the job, could be a whole lot better.

BRIAN PENDARVIS

## Currie axle and steering upgrades for the JK

By Sue Majich

[jpeditor@jpmagazine.com](mailto:jpeditor@jpmagazine.com)

Photography: Sue Majich

One of the weakest points on a JK is the front axle. The Dana 30 front axle that comes standard in the JK (Rubicons get the Dana NG 44 front axle) is not known for being the strongest axle

around. The axletubes are thin-wall to save weight, the axleshafts are 27-spline, and the end forgings are just not thick enough to stand up to heavy abuse. All that said, they still stand up to way more abuse than they really should, provided the tire size and vehicle weight doesn't get too large or heavy. While the JK Rubicon's Dana NG 44 is a bit of an upgrade, it shares the same tubes, end forgings, and knuckles with the Dana 30. The only real difference is the size of the differential, a thicker-cut gearset, and the 32-spline axleshafts in the rear.

As the tires get bigger and we add more armor to our Jeeps, bending or

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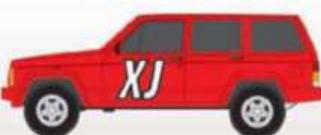
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## CURRIE BEEF



There's a lot that goes into the housings of these differentials. Having worked as a heavy equipment and truck mechanic, I've done most jobs on a vehicle—engine rebuilds, several transmission rebuilds, lots of hydraulic system repairs, etc. For some reason, differentials just baffle me. It was a good thing to have the experts at Currie Enterprises put this together.



These ball-joints from Synergy Manufacturing are light years better than those from the factory. The factory ball-joints use a nylon liner inside and are not able to be greased. Synergy made these with a bronze and graphite cup, a hardened steel ball, and then added grease zerk. This makes for a much tighter joint and vastly improved handling and wear, especially when running bigger tires.



One of the nice things about having this job professionally installed is having the tools and equipment to do things properly. The bolt holes in the ARB carrier are too small for the JK-spec ring-gear bolts. Sure, reaming these out could be done by hand, but this Bridgeport knee-mill just makes things so nice. Hmm, we think we see an open space in the corner of the garage.



A small die grinder and a carbide burr are all that's needed to get this done. Well, that and a little experience. The bearing cap needs to have a notch ground into it so the air line can pass through without trouble. Where the experience comes in is knowing how much to grind without severely weakening the cap. When in doubt, it's always easier to go back and grind a little more.



The center section Currie uses on its RockJock housings is immense compared to the factory JK Dana NG 44. With walls nearly an inch thick, the RockJock can withstand some heavy abuse. The only thing we miss is a drain plug. While it's not a bad idea to pull the cover and take a look at the insides while changing the oil, we personally don't want to have to reseal it at every oil change.



One of those great mysteries of life—well, of the Jeep world at least—is who thought it was a good idea to build a differential cover out of “tin-foil.” It’s not really, but it sure looks like it. The Currie cast-iron cover is a huge improvement over the factory cover. It’s about a  $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch thick, with recessed holes to protect the bolt heads. The dipstick is a nice touch, making it easier and cleaner to check the gear-oil level.

breaking the front axle becomes more likely. In fact, it's almost a given. A couple of the more common problems that show up are the end forgings bending and the axletubes bending where they enter the differential housing. The end forgings, or inner-C, is where the knuckles connect to the axle via the ball joints. Hitting enough big bumps with a heavy vehicle and big tires can cause the forging to bend in at the top, resulting in high negative camber. While not catastrophic, it does lead to your tires wearing out quickly along the inside edge and alignment issues which can make the steering a little twitchy. Bending the tubes at the differential, however, can lead to catastrophic failure. In other words, the axle falls apart and you're getting towed home.

When the axles in our '11 JK started to smile a little (the rear axle was even smiling some) we got to talking about how to fix it. There are numerous ways we could have gone. Several companies make inner-C gussets, trusses, and sleeves for the axletubes. We could have chosen any of these and had our axle straightened and strengthened. We also talked about finding an old 44 and beefing it up to Dana 60 standards, using off-the-shelf parts only—nothing custom. During the conversations, we kept coming back around to what the inherent strengths of our Rubicon's factory front axle were, though. It has that thick-cut ring gear and the oversized pinion shaft. Then the RockJock 44 housing from Currie Enterprises caught our eye.

Built to JK specifications, the Currie RockJock 44 housing would allow us to keep the strength of that heavier gearset, while getting a heavy-wall axletube, heavier center section, and much heavier end forgings. We decided on a 4.88:1 gear ratio to help turn our 37-inch tires, with ARB air lockers for traction duties. The beauty of selectable lockers, like the ARBs, is that you get all the advantages of a full spool off-road, while keeping the on-road manners of an open differential.

Revolution Gear and Axle provided us with everything else we needed to complete the axles. We got gearsets made from 8620 steel forgings, 35-spline axleshafts made from 4340 cromoly steel, and the setup kits, all of which are American made. As compared to the factory axleshafts, which are just under  $1\frac{1}{8}$ -inch diameter with 30-spline ends (rear shafts are 32-spline), the Revolution shafts are a full  $1\frac{1}{2}$ -inch diameter with 35-splines. They still use the larger 1350 U-joints, which then drop back down to 32-splines at the outer stub. The reason for this is that the unit-bearing can't take anything bigger. To open up the unit-bearing splines large enough to accept a 35-spline outer stub would weaken it to an unacceptable degree. Oh well, you can't have everything. All in all, we think we did fairly well in getting a Dana 44 that's nearly up to one-ton strength. It's certainly strong enough for just about anything we're going to throw at it with our JK.



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## CURRIE BEEF



Two of the three ports here are self-explanatory. The brass nipple is for the vent line; the other nipple is for the locker air line. Less self-evident is the large plug with the hole next to it. That plug covers the hole where the wiring goes through if we were reusing the factory electric locker. We'll have to pull the bolt out of the factory housing and use it to plug that hole.



Swapping an axle out really isn't that difficult. With some basic tools, a driveway, and some help, you may be able to swap them out over a weekend. Air tools do make things go faster, though. We took the opportunity to check everything out under the vehicle for wear and loose bolts. When you're this deep into it, it only makes sense to go over everything.



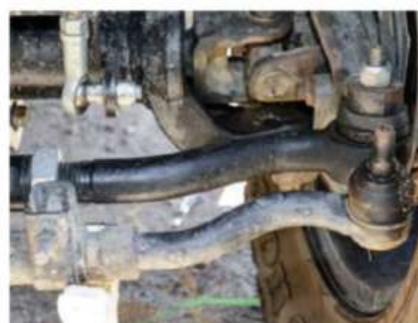
Sometimes when all the right tools are just not enough, you need a little creativity. We tried pickle forks, ball-joint pullers, C-clamps, and hammers—the upper ball joint just did not want to release from the knuckle. We finally resorted to our trusty reciprocating saw and cut the stud off. It was a lot easier to get the rest of the stud out with the knuckle clamped in a vise.



The rear brake rotors and parking brake hardware were some of the parts we decided not to reuse. Ours were pretty well worn out already, so we replaced them. Considering how much better the parking brake works now, it was well worth it. We don't have to hope and pray every time we park on a hill anymore.

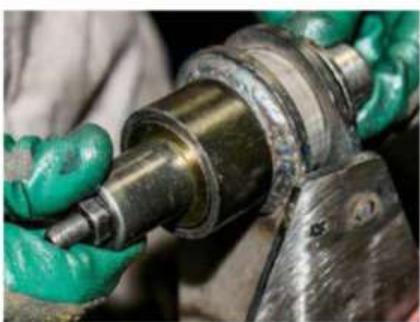


The Currie Correctlync steering is made from heavy-duty heat-treated tube used for the links, with 1½-inch forged-steel rod ends. Because they feature a threaded-in tie-rod-end cartridge (identical at all four points), the rod ends can be rebuilt. You just unscrew the bad joint, thread in a new one, and you're done.



The size of the Currie links is amazing when compared to the factory parts. The factory 1½-inch tube just isn't up to the task of any serious off-road work with large tires. Our tie rod and draglink both had pretty good bows in them. We noticed that steering feel was much improved in our JK after the swap.

The Correctlync steering system is a direct bolt-in replacement for the factory parts. No special tools or machine work is necessary. The only issue we had was that the size of the knuckles pushed the dust shield into the brake rotors. A little trimming with a die grinder on the dust shield took care of that problem.



After 90,000 miles, the factory bushings were toast. The Johnny Joints we replaced them with helped to tighten up the suspension. They use a precision-machined steel ball inside a urethane bushing. Along with being impervious to weather, they are greaseable and allow for up to 30 degrees of unrestricted movement. Standard heim joints only allow for about 22 degrees.



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Why the factory rod-ends are not greaseable is a mystery. Whatever the case may be, Currie rectified that with its steering kit. All four rod-ends have grease zerkers in them. A few pumps is all it takes, but those few pumps help prolong the life of the rod-end by a large margin.



The Correctlync steering includes the brackets to reuse the factory-style steering stabilizer. Since our '11 JK already had a Fox ATS stabilizer on it, we didn't need the brackets. However, we did have to buy a new clamp for it, as the standard clamp is for a 1½-inch tube.



Our sPOD was full, we had already removed the factory electric-disconnect anti-sway bar, and now the factory lockers were going away as well. Because we no longer needed the factory switch panel, we thought this would be a neat place to install the air pump switches. A bit of trimming with a razor knife made room for them. Right next to the brake master cylinder is a hole in the firewall where we pulled the ARB-provided wiring harness through before assembling the plugs on the end.



Along with needing air for our lockers, we wanted to be able to air up our tires and possibly run air tools. We decided on ARB's CKMTA-12 twin compressor with the air-up kit. It inflates our 37-inch tires from 10 to 25 psi in less than two minutes. We haven't decided on a tank yet, but we shouldn't have any problem running a few air tools.



It was a tight fit, but the M.O.R.E. compressor mount worked perfectly. It does make it a little difficult getting to the brake reservoir, but the mount is solid. When you hook up the air lines, remember to always use Teflon tape on threaded fittings. We decided to use gas-line-rated tape (yellow) as it's slightly thicker and should help with vibration, as well as making a tighter seal.



To mount the compressor, we used a part from Mountain Off-Road Enterprises (M.O.R.E.). It was a simple install and went in nicely. The only thing we aren't fond of is how it mounted to the plastic against the fender. We haven't had any problems with it yet and don't really foresee any, but we do think that it could use a more solid point on that side than what is basically a wiring harness cover.



Our JK's maiden voyage, with its new steering and axles, was to go recover a broken-down Jeep. The 4.88 gears made a huge difference both on- and off-road compared to the factory 4.10 gears with the 37-inch tires. We did find a need to reroute the air lines, though. We put them a little too close to the exhaust, and while it didn't melt the tubing, the heat did melt the loom the tubing was in. It wasn't a huge deal, but for long-term reliability, they need to be moved. ☀

### Sources

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**Revolution Gear & Axle**, 844/213-4327, [revolutiongear.com](http://revolutiongear.com)

**ARB 4x4 Accessories**, 866/293-9078, [arbusa.com](http://arbusa.com)

**Mountain Off-Road Enterprises**, 877/533-7229, [mountainoffroad.com](http://mountainoffroad.com)

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# CURING PRESSURE DROP

**Rebuilding the oil pump and adding a remote filter setup for an AMC 360ci V8**

By Stuart Bourdon

*jpeditor@jpmagazine.com*

Photography: Stuart Bourdon

We have owned our '79 Jeep Cherokee (SJ) for a few months now, and although it's

a bit rough, we have fallen in love. The body has a few dents and dings and carries that rust/old paint patina that we will likely never ruin with a spray job. All the mechanics are in running order, although as any Jeeper knows, nothing is ever perfect, especially when you're dealing with a steel and rubber critter that was born in the age of classic rock 'n' roll. We had noticed almost since the day we brought her home, though, that the oil pressure is not always up into what we would call a comfortable range.

We knew it was time to deal with this oil pressure drop. There can be a few

culprits causing it, but after a thorough examination, we determined that the most likely was the oil pump. Our first clue was the seeping from the mating surface between the oil filter adapter (a neck-like cast aluminum feature between the pump and filter) and the bottom of the oil pump housing that is integrated into the timing chain cover. This was merely an indication of the problem inside.

The oil pump housing and the oil filter adapter are both aluminum. However, the gears inside the oil pump housing are steel. The bottom sides of the steel gears rotate against the top of the aluminum filter adapter. Eventually this creates a swirl pattern carved into the filter adapter. This gap (or tolerance) created underneath the bottoms of the steel gears and the aluminum surface they ride on can allow oil to bypass the gears and lower overall oil pressure. The gear teeth can also begin to wear and lose tolerance, which doesn't help keep up proper oil pressure.

There are several fixes: repair or replace the gouged up filter adapter; replace what may be worn-down oil pump gears; or use a steel midplate between the oil filter adapter and the oil pump housing to prevent the gears from cutting into the aluminum filter adapter again. Some don't like using a midplate because it means there are now two gaskets (one on each side of the steel midplate) through which leaks might occur, instead of the single gasket between the filter adapter and the oil pump housing.



This seeping oil filter adapter gasket was a problem we needed to fix. It led us to dealing with a low oil pressure problem we had wanted to take care of since we had acquired the 360ci V8-powered '79 Jeep Cherokee.

We also wanted to put a remote oil filter setup into the 360's oiling system, and the oil filter relocation kit from Bulltear helped us accomplish that goal. It also provided an opportunity to ditch the factory oil filter adapter. The Bulltear kit included a machined billet aluminum filter relocation end plate, NPT fittings, hoses, and a remote oil filter adapter. We needed more hose than the Bulltear kit came with and easily found it at a local Parker Hose distributor. We also got a midplate kit (it comes with two gaskets) from Bulltear.



One of most important things you can do to help solve a low oil pressure problem on the AMC 360ci V8 is to rebuild the oil pump. A set of new gears and oil pressure bypass spring and plunger from BJs Off-Road was a good start.



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## CURING PRESSURE DROP



There is little room to spare between all the steering gear, transmission cooler tubes running to the radiator, and the oil filter adapter. However, with some patience we removed all seven of the bolts that attached it to the oil pump housing.

However, the solution for us was the Bulltear Oil Filter Relocation Kit (PN 626). It meant we could do away with the scarred oil filter adapter completely and have a remote oil filter. The Bulltear kit includes an oil filter relocation end plate for the oil pump housing bottom. The end plate is a beautifully machined billet aluminum piece that retains the oil pressure bypass spring and plunger, and features two  $\frac{1}{2}$ -14 NPT ports capable of flowing a -12 AN line. The kit also provides brass NPT fittings (two 90 degree and two straight), two 15-inch lengths of Parker  $\frac{1}{16}$ -inch hose (PN 5139-10 WP) that is rated at 310 psi, and a remote oil filter adapter (PermaCool PN 1791). We wanted to mount the remote filter up in the engine compartment on the inner fender wheel, so we needed more than 15 inches of hose. Fortunately, we found all we wanted through the Parker Hose website, which directed us to its nearest distributor.

We also replaced the oil pump gears with a new set from BJs Off-Road and decided to go with the steel midplate as well. Even if you repair or replace the aluminum adapter, the steel gears are going to continue to eat at any aluminum part they ride on, and you are just going to have a pressure problem there again. The steel midplate and its gaskets came from Bulltear.

The entire job took about half a day, and it was fairly easy as go this sort of mechanical work and modifications. The end result is that we now have more oil in the system because the remote system adds oil capacity in the length of its hoses, the filter is up and out of the way so it's much easier to change oil and filters, and our oil pressure returned to a much more comfortable range. This was something that we were very happy to see. ☺

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[bjsoffroad.com](http://bjsoffroad.com)

**Bulltear**, 855/433-3689, [bulltear.com](http://bulltear.com)

**Parker Hose**, 800/272-7537,  
[parker.com](http://parker.com)



Be careful when removing the oil filter adapter, as there will be a substantial amount of oil left in the pump even though you have already drained the system through the oil pan. As well, one or both of the oil pump gears may fall out as the adapter is removed. If the drive gear (right in this photo) doesn't drop out on its own, it can be easily pulled out. The top of its shaft is splined to mate with the bottom of the distributor shaft.



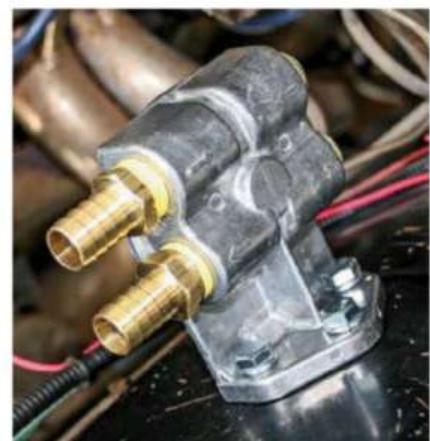
All of the new oil-pump internals, such as the bypass spring and plunger and both pump gears, were coated with generous amounts of petroleum jelly (Vaseline) for lubrication during the priming of the oiling system before firing up the engine. We also packed the oil pump housing with petroleum jelly to completely surround the gears. This will also hold the gears in place until you can install the filter relocation end plate. When your buddies ask why you have a container of Vaseline in your toolbox, just tell them it's personal.



We used yellow (for gas lines) thread sealant tape when installing the NPT fittings into the Bulltear machined billet aluminum oil filter relocation end plate for insurance against leaks. The bypass plunger, spring, and bypass bolt and washer were installed at the same time.



Using the factory bolts we had cleaned up after removal, and with a dab of anti-seize on them to keep these steel bolts from permanently joining with the aluminum oil pump housing they were going into, we installed the Bulltear remote oil filter relocation end plate and the midplate with its two gaskets. Gasket sealer was used on both gaskets. We hate leaks.



After installing its NPT fittings, we held the remote filter adapter bracket in place on the inner fender where we wanted it and used a center pump through its mounting holes to mark our drill points. Next, we drilled three  $\frac{3}{16}$ -inch holes for the  $\frac{5}{16} \times 1\frac{1}{2}$ -inch threaded bolts we procured at our local hardware store and used lock washers (on both sides) and nuts to secure the bracket to the inner fender.



The final touches on the installation were to run the hoses between the input and output NPT fittings on the remote filter relocation end plate and the remote filter adapter, secure the hoses with clamps, and then install the new oil filter. We disconnected power to the distributor so the cylinders would get no spark and cranked the engine using the starter to prime the oiling system. Our 360ci V-8 now has oil pressure we feel good about, running around 60 psi when cruising and about 40 psi at idle once the engine is warmed up.

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# BANTAM HERITAGE FESTIVAL CELEBRATION

**75 years of Jeep still strong**

By Brittany Hill [jpeditor@jpmagazine.com](mailto:jpeditor@jpmagazine.com)  
Photography: Ashley and Brittany Hill

**The Bantam** Jeep Heritage Festival is a salute to an icon, the people who created it, and to

where it all began in Butler, Pennsylvania. In celebration of the 75th anniversary of the original Bantam Jeep, this year was bigger than ever. In fact, a Guinness World Record-breaking number of 2,420 Jeeps cruised down Main Street on the event's opening day.

Leading the parade was a replica of the original Pilot, the prototype for the military-commissioned Bantam Recon Car constructed in 1940 for use in World War II. Seventy-five historic vehicles followed, representing the evolution of the brand from 1940 to 2015 in a parade that lasted over six hours. Jeeps hailed from 38 states, as well as Canada, this year. First-time attendee Bill Brokaw said, "This was our first time at Bantam, and I'm going to make it a tradition. I got goose bumps when I pulled into the parade staging area. The sight of thousands of Jeeps was memorable."

Bantam is a family-friendly weekend, filled with camping, trail rides, and an extensive display history. Beginning in 2011, the Bantam Jeep Heritage Festival has been attracting a huge crowd, and attendance has grown year after year. More than 20,000 participants showed up this year for the three-day festival at Cooper's Lake Campground, just north of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

Nearly a century after the American Bantam Car Company delivered the world's most famous military 4x4, the WWII jeep is still fondly recognized on roads everywhere. This symbol of strength and freedom holds a special place in the hearts of many, and the ever-growing Bantam Jeep Heritage Festival is proof of just that. Check out the gallery of photos to see the amazing number and variety of Jeeps in attendance this year.



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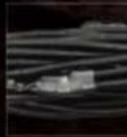


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## BANTAM HERITAGE



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724/234-2991, [bantamjeepfestival.com](http://bantamjeepfestival.com)

**Butler County Tourism & Convention Bureau,** 724/234-4619, [visitbutlercounty.com](http://visitbutlercounty.com)

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# HIGH FIVE

If you didn't know already, we love CJ-5s. They aren't as expensive as flatfenders and often come with better drivetrain components. Plus, they retain the nimble size, lack of electronic nannies, and flat metal dashes that make flatfenders so appealing. If there is one downside to a CJ-5, it's the lack of interior room. This isn't a big deal if you're traveling alone or taking an overnight trip. Want to take a passenger? Or leave town for multiple days? Better pack light. Or you could do what John Briggs did and build an off-road-specific trailer to bring everything you need with you on the trail.

## Chassis

John Briggs started with a '67 CJ-5 and reinforced the frame using additional crossmembers to resist flexing. John has owned this Jeep for 20 years, and it has been through three major reconstructions during that time. Currently, the front box-tube bumper ties together the two sides of the frame and is backed by a winch plate topped with a Warn M8000 and reinforcing around the mounting of the Saginaw steering box. A Currie brace also helps keep the steering box firmly in place. Another box-tube bumper is found at the rear of the Jeep, which is carrying a fullsize BF Goodrich Krawler spare tire and a heavily reinforced receiver hitch.

A typical ball hitch would bind on the trail, and pintle hitches can be noisy. Instead, Briggs built a custom hitch that allows the trailer to articulate and uses a Dana 27 hub and spindle that eliminates any binding. The hitch is built into a 2x2-inch box-tube frame that features fenders at the top of the tub to allow for 33-inch Super Swampers while keeping the trailer low. An offset axle, like a portal axle, is used in the trailer and provides gobs of ground clearance. Trailer springs are mounted above the axle, but no shocks are used on the trailer as most of the articulation comes from the hitch.

Suspension on the Jeep consists of Rancho RS5000 shocks and Full Traction leaf springs intended for a YJ Wrangler. The YJ springs are longer and wider than CJ springs and have a lower spring rate that improves ride quality and maximizes articulation. The springs are mounted over the axles, and Briggs added



**This CJ-5 is well built, not overbuilt**

By Harry Wagner

*jpeditor@jmpmagazine.com*

Photography: Verne Simons







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## HIGH FIVE

a shackle conversion at the same time as the YJ springs. This allows the front axle to move rearward when encountering obstacles, reducing the shock load to the frame. The downside to the shackle reversal is that when the passenger side suspension droops, the axle now moves forward, requiring a long-slip driveline.

### Drivetrain

The odd-fire Buick V-6 engine is the perfect powerplant for a CJ-5. It fits well in the engine bay, the distributor is up front, it makes gobs of torque, and the exhaust note is unmistakable. Briggs upgraded his V-6 with a DUI ignition and Retrotek Powerjection throttle body fuel injection that runs at any angle. Power is then routed through a Ford T18 manual transmission using parts from Novak. The T18 has a 6.32:1 low range and is only 11.9 inches long, allowing enough room for a reasonable rear driveshaft length. The original Dana 18 transfer case is still present and backed by a Warn overdrive that offsets the 5.38 axle gears at highway speeds.

The front axle is a narrow-track, open-knuckle Dana 30 out of a '73 CJ and uses an ARB Air Locker with 5.38 gears. Alloy USA chromoly axleshafts have also been added with full circle-clip snap rings and larger 760X U-joints to keep from snapping when the 35-inch BFGoodrich Krawlers get bound up in the rocks. The rear axle is the original offset Dana 44, but it has been beefed up with a full spool and a since-discontinued Warn full-float conversion complete with chromoly axleshafts, drive flanges, and disc brakes. Since shooting our feature, John has replaced the spool with a selectable OX Locker and reports that handling is much improved on both the street and tight trails. Both axles use tubular guards over the factory diff covers to keep the covers dent free and off of the ring gear. The track width of the trailer is slightly narrower than the Jeep to allow it to easily follow on the trails.



# SHARP WRAX

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### HARD FACTS

**Vehicle:** '67 Jeep CJ-5

**Engine:** Buick 225ci odd-fire V-6

**Transmission:** Ford T18 four-speed manual

**Transfer Case:** Dana 18

**Suspension:** Springover w/ Full Traction YJ leaf springs

**Axles:** Dana 30 w/ 5.38 gears, ARB Air Locker, and Alloy USA axle shafts (front); Dana 44 w/ 5.38 gears, full spool, and Warn full-float kit (rear)

**Wheels:** 15x10 Eagle Alloy aluminum

**Tires:** 35x13.50R15 BFGoodrich Krawler KXs

**Built For:** Exploring the Sierra Nevada

**Estimated Cost:** \$20,000



[sharpwrax.com](http://sharpwrax.com)

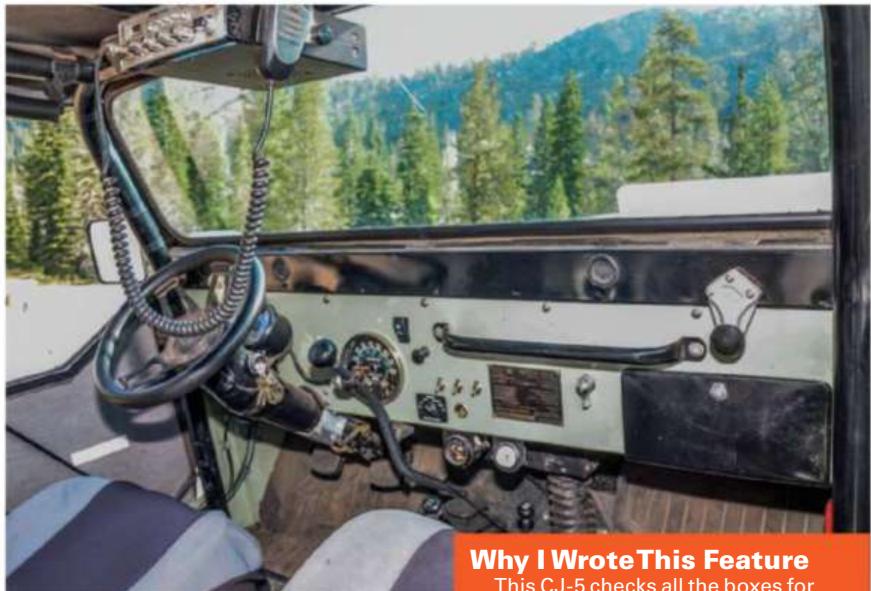
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- ▶ innovation



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### Why I Wrote This Feature

This CJ-5 checks all the boxes for me when it comes to a Jeep that is memorable and feature-worthy. I love the green paint and black windshield frame, the strong and simple drivetrain, and most of all the fact that Briggs built this Jeep himself at home over the course of two years.

—Harry Wagner

### Body and Interior

Briggs tastefully trimmed the front and rear fenders to better accommodate the 35-inch-tall BFGoodrich Krawlers. The sheetmetal is otherwise stock, as is the interior. He did add a GM tilt column and a full rollcage with a Cobra CB mounted above the seats, which are covered with Wet Okole neoprene seat covers.

Most of the aftermarket goodies are hidden out of sight under the hood. The Quick Air2 electric air compressor is hard-wired inside the passenger front fender and plumbed to an air chuck in the front grille that allows the tires to be aired up without lifting the hood. On the other side of the engine bay, a Premiere Power Welder offers peace of mind on the trail, although Briggs seems to use the welder more to repair the vehicles of others than his own Jeep. An Optima RedTop battery mounted on the firewall powers the welder and air compressor. The trailer bed is just big enough to fit John and his wife's camping gear. It's made from plywood that is skinned with sheetmetal to keep weight to a minimum.

### Good, Bad, and What It's For

John Briggs' Jeep is built enough to tackle trails like the Rubicon and Dusy-Ershim without fear of breakage but no so overbuilt that it must be trailered everywhere. The addition of the trailer results in a Jeep that is much smaller and more maneuverable than a four-door JK but still has the cargo capacity for a family of four. Plus, when you get to camp, you can drop the trailer and go have fun. ☺

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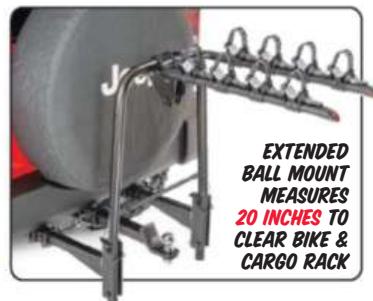
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## Where would you want to be on a hot summer day in Southern California?

You would want to be at the beach, of course. That's exactly where more than 100 Jeeps and their owners were for the KMC Summer Jeep Bash presented by Jeep in Long Beach, California. While there was no four-wheeling, the Bash was no less an event. Flocks of Jeepers were present with their rigs on display, and all of them were talking to other Jeep fans about the newest parts and accessories, new trails to run, and ideas about how to make their rigs more trail-worthy.

A handful of major aftermarket product manufacturers were also on-hand to show off and explain the inner workings of their latest goodies for Jeeps of any type. Among those represented was KMC Wheels, there to give everyone a peek at its new real beadlock Machete

wheel with a 3½ or 4 inch backspacing. Off Road Evolution, Dynatrac, and King Shocks were onsite with their latest wares. Jeepspeed was also on deck to talk about its racing series and new products for making your rig faster and stronger. Jeep even brought the concept rigs it debuted at the Moab Easter Jeep Safari so KMC Summer Jeep Bash attendees could check them out firsthand.

The real show, though, were the Jeeps of all sizes, shapes, and types spread out at Shoreline Aquatic Park. While there were more JKs than there are ears in a cornfield, there were also a good number of CJs, TJs, YJs, Cherokees, and even a few historic vehicles as well. Some of our favorites came with custom trailers, custom builds, or great stories. Keep your eyes open for next year's KMC Summer Jeep Bash event, as it will no doubt be bigger and better than ever. For now, you can check out the gallery of rigs we saw while cruising the beach.



There is nothing quite like a Jeep girl. This one displayed her affection for the brand with a tri-vehicular pyramid tattoo.

### The KMC Wheels Summer Jeep Bash was kicked off with a bang

By Stuart Bourdon [jpeditor@jpmagazine.com](mailto:jpeditor@jpmagazine.com) Photography: Stuart Bourdon

# JEEP PARTY





Darrin Holiday rolled into the KMC Summer Jeep Bash with his '04 TJ. It wasn't overly modified but did stand on a 3-inch Tera-Flex short-arm kit and 33-inch rubber. Even more interesting was the trailer behind his Jeep. Holiday's home-built trailer began as a '95 Cherokee that had been in a head-on accident. The crunched front half was cut off and discarded. The rear was gutted and a sleeping compartment and camp kitchen created. For more sleeping space, a pop-up tent topper was added above.



Suspension modifications on display ranged from mild to wild, but one of our favorites was this reservoir shock-and-coil combo set into a custom hoop on the frontend of a Jeep Wrangler JK.



Among the more popular rigs on deck at the KMC Summer Jeep Bash was Mel Wade's race-prepared JK that he uses to compete in Ultra4 Racing, a nationwide series that includes the infamous King of The Hammers desert race held in Johnson Valley, California.



## JEEP PARTY



A handful of JKs in attendance carried Hemi transplants. This excellent example resides in Brian Waitelich's '07 Unlimited, which also sported an EVO suspension system, Dynatrac 44s, and AEV wheels wrapped with 37-inch Goodyear M/Ts.

Romanian-born Jeep-fan Cornell Illiese emigrated to the U.S. shortly after WWII. It was during the war that he saw his first Willys. Illiese became a successful businessman in America and has spent decades restoring WWII military vehicles, including the '42 Willys Combat Car he brought to the show.



This simple, but capable, '79 CJ-7 belongs to Curtis Celaya and is stock except for some minor mods for utility, such as fuel cans and a can rack, roll cage and bikini top, auxiliary lighting on the nose, and a winch for recovery purposes. Its 4.2L I-6 has been rebuilt and is running strong. We liked the doorsill-mounted HiLift jack. Behind Celaya's '79 CJ-7 we found this '60 Scatabout teardrop trailer in excellent shape. It was used by his grandparents for years on their camping voyages and then was passed down to him. Other than some decor a bit more in tune with Celaya's lifestyle, the teardrop is vintage.



This Willys has seen more than its fair share of modifications from road to roof, and it stood tall above every other rig at the show on its Interco TSL Super Swampers. Check out that "custom" frame, front stinger bumper, and the reservoir shocks front and rear. We're not sure what model year the Willys body is (the owner was not to be found), but if you can tell, let us know.

---

**Keep your eyes  
open for next  
year's KMC  
Summer Jeep  
Bash event...**

---

Modified Jeep Wrangler JKs were lined up from one end to the other of Shoreline Aquatic Park. By their numbers, JKs dominated the KMC Summer Jeep Bash. ☀





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## **Warn's Zeon 10-S Platinum winch is a game changer**

**By Ali Mansour**

*jpeditor@jmpmagazine.com*

**Photography: Ali Mansour**

**Purchasing** recovery gear for your Jeep can sometimes feel like paying for car insurance.

Sure, you know you need it, but you really hope that you don't have to use it. By far, our favorite and most-used piece of recovery equipment is a winch. When it comes to buying a winch, a handful of parameters must first be examined before committing to one over the other.

The best way to narrow down your field of choices is by using a simple math

equation. Using your vehicle's weight, multiple that figure by 1½. The resulting number will be the minimum-pound rating that you should shop for. For example, our modified '07 Jeep Wrangler Unlimited Rubicon weighs in around 5,500 pounds. Multiplying that number by 1½ gives us a figure of 8,250 pounds. This means any winch with a rated line pull of that or above is on the table.

Another key parameter for winching is speed. If we're hanging off the edge of a cliff, the last thing we want is a leisurely pull back to safety. When we say speed, we are referring specifically to line speed. While line speed and amp draw varies depending on load, for companies such as Warn, its Platinum series winches tend to have double the speed of other more entry-level offerings.

For our needs (and admittedly our wants), we opted to install Warn's new Zeon 10-S Platinum series winch on our project '07 JK. When it comes to winches, Warn is as much a staple in the recovery

business as Coca-Cola is in the drink business. The company's latest Platinum line of Zeon winches is designed with the wheeling enthusiast in mind. Compared to the standard Warn Zeon series winch, the Platinum series offers a 20 percent faster line speed, extreme IP68-rated waterproofing, and a high-performance motor package.

In addition to an Advanced Wireless Remote, the 10,000-pound-rated winch receives Spydura synthetic rope. Just as interesting as what the winch has, is what it doesn't have. Unlike the standard Zeon, the winch's clutch (free spool, winch-in, winch-out) is controlled entirely by a handheld remote. No more crawling over the hood in the swamp to search for a clutch lever!

We spent an afternoon stuffing the heavy-duty winch in the front of an EVO Manufacturing Pro Series front bumper. Shortly thereafter, we proceeded to use it on multiple off-road adventures. Gathered here is our overview and impressions of one of the most cutting-edge winches on the market.

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## RAPID RECOVERY



Warn's Zeon 10-S Platinum is fit with a high-performance 12V DC, series-wound three-stage planetary geartrain with a ratio of 162:1. This equates to a line speed of up to 44 feet per minute.



Two helpful tips before setting the winch in the mounting tray: First, after you set in your nut inserts for the winch, place tape over the holes so they don't drop out. Second, apply a small amount of grease to the rope opening in the drum and to the end of the rope itself. This will make feeding the rope in much easier.



A very handy feature is the built-in accessory port on the back of the controller box. This is great for wiring in auxiliary lighting. For those looking to tuck the Platinum-series winch in a low-profile or enclosed bumper, the controller box can easily be relocated with Warn's optional relocation kit.



Many of the new Warn winches have gone to a more centered design, which may or may not work with some bumpers. We're using a Pro Series winch-mount bumper from EVO Manufacturing, which is designed to accept both new and old-style winches.



The Advanced Wireless Remote looks more like a Game Boy than a run-of-the-mill winch controller. Since the winch uses a Wi-Fi signal to communicate with the controller box, it's a completely wireless operation. From the controller you can handle all of your winching needs (including free-spooling the clutch). In addition, this is what controls your auxiliary ports on the control box for any aftermarket accessories you may have wired in. One of the handiest features is the built-in thermometric meter that monitors the winch motor's temperature, along with a gauge to view the battery's charge level.



The S portion of the Platinum 10-S name means that the winch comes with 100 feet of  $\frac{3}{8}$ -inch Spydura synthetic rope. This setup includes an aluminum hawse fairlead as well. Going with rope over cable saves a little weight, while still retaining the line strength needed. Synthetic rope will require a little more preventative maintenance, but is an excellent choice for both recreational and competitive wheelers.



One option we did go for on our EVO Manufacturing Pro Series JK front bumper was the lower skidplate. It finishes out the high-clearance stubby bumper nicely and helps guard our Rubicon model's expensive electronic anti-sway bar disconnect. Note, the bumper came bare, so we opted to have ours powder coated by Area 51 Powder Coating in Wilmington, North Carolina. We went with a base primer, plus a semi-gloss finish, which will be easy to touch up and keep looking sharp. ☀

### Platinum Pondering

There is no question that Warn's New Platinum-series 10-S is a game changer in the world of winches. We've used it hard and can attest that it is very fast. Our biggest learning curve was the remote. It works great, but requires a bit of operator trial-and-error and planning ahead. There were definitely times where we felt it may have been faster to have the old-style thumb toggle and manual clutch disconnect, but that may be mostly due to us being slow to learn the new technology.

### Sources

- Area 51 Powder Coating**, 910/769-1724, area51powdercoating.com
- EVO Manufacturing**, 714/879-8913, evomfg.com
- Warn**, 800/543-9276, warn.com

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**How many** of you wash your Jeep yourself? I do, except I occasionally head over to the

local brushless carwash mainly because I'm feeling tired that day or my girls don't want to sit around bored while I wash the Jeep. However, wheels and tires can be tough to clean because, well, they are closer to the road and trail than anything else and more easily pick up grease, grime, and goo. Wheels also often get coated with brake dust, which, as you know, is not fun to clean off.

After reading about Eagle One A2Z All Wheel & Tire Cleaner we were

impressed by the claims, but being who we are, we are skeptical about almost everything we read or hear, until otherwise proven. With one of the 64-ounce spray bottles (23-ounce bottles are also available) of Eagle One A2Z All Wheel & Tire Cleaner in our hands, we went to work testing it.

The product uses a foaming action to remove grease, grime, and brake dust. It's an acid-free cleaner and can be used on all types of wheels and hubcaps. The label on the bottle lets you know it can be used for other things too, such as wheelwells, lower door panels, door jams, and inside fuel doors. As long as they are factory (not home spray-jobs) painted wheels, you should be able to use it on nearly anything.

We put the cleaner to a monumental test: cleaning the old 40-inch MTR's and Walker Evans Racing beadlocks on our beater J-truck. Of all our Jeeps, it is by far the crustiest. The previous owner used it as a hunting rig and didn't take care of the wheels and tires. In simple terms, they were mud-soaked and filthy. The tires weren't black; they were more of an ash color.

As with most products, you have



Eagle One A2Z All Wheel & Tire Cleaner comes in 2-quart bottles with a pump-spray dispenser attachment to make application easy.

## **Eagle One A2Z All Wheel & Tire Cleaner makes cleanup easy**

By Katie Jansma  
*jpeditor@jpmagazine.com*  
Photography: Levi Jansma

# **PRODUCT REVIEW**



We suggest the liberal use of the tire-and-wheel cleaning foam for best results, and make sure it gets into every nook and cranny. Allow it to soak in and foam up for at least 30 seconds before washing off the tire and wheel with clean water.





As you can see from the example shown here, an application of the Eagle One All A2Z Wheel and Tire Cleaner made quick work of the dirt and grime coating our J-truck's rubber and rim.

to follow the instructions for it to work right. We grabbed our tire brush just in case, and then sprayed the product evenly on both the wheel and tire, allowing it to soak for the 30 seconds. Then we scrubbed it with the tire brush. During those 30 seconds we could see the dirt "melting" off the metal and rubber. We would say it looked like butter on warm toast, but we're not sure if food and automotive cleaner should be mentioned in the same sentence.

After scrubbing the tire, we washed it off with water and then cleaned it with a dry clean towel. For these tires and wheels, one application wasn't enough. We needed to wash, rinse, and repeat two or three times, because this set of wheels and tires had been sitting for a long time. We also used the Eagle One A2Z on the 37-inch Xtreme MT2s and ProComp Predator wheels on our JK after it had been on a mucky muddy trail and it worked extremely well on them too.

That said, we have to caution that Eagle One A2Z is a chemical compound and care should be taken when using this product. The label clearly suggests the use of eye protection and gloves in case of a skin reaction, and you would definitely not want to get this stuff in your eye, so please use this product safely. ☺

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*[Handwritten signature of Brian Deegan]*

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When noted Jeep collector Rick Riley added this '65 J-210 to his collection, it was showing only 88,489 miles and had spent the better part of two decades in a Nebraska shed. It didn't take much to get it running but it's pretty tired and a bit "farmered" here and there. It's a basic model without many options. Among the few options are the larger Deluxe rear window, which became standard later, a rear step bumper, and chrome

hubcaps. This truck is odd in that it shows up in the monthly production lists as having been assembled in October 1963, which would technically make it a '64 model. This question is answered in the August 17, 1964, Confidential Trade Bulletin where it and other unsold '64 Jeeps were redesignated by VIN as '65 models. This was common practice in the old days before the Feds shut it down.



## 1965 Jeep Gladiator barn find

By Jim Allen  
[jpeditor@jpmagazine.com](mailto:jpeditor@jpmagazine.com)  
Photography: Jim Allen

# JEEP ENCYCLOPEDIA

## When the '63 model year Gladiator debuted in November 1962, it brought Kaiser Jeep

close to parity with the Big Three in the light-truck market. They were burly, stylish trucks that came in a vast array of models from light  $\frac{1}{2}$ -ton to 1-ton dual-rear-wheel. The Gladiator also offered an impressive array of options, but there was one thing missing: a V-8 engine. That shortcoming would hurt Jeep in the marketplace, and today, nobody really understands why the company went down that road. They were working on a V-8 option, but elements within the company believed its whiz-bang new Tornado overhead-cam six should be more than enough for anyone.

By mid-1965, the V-8 problem was solved with the addition of an AMC

327. The many teething problems the overhead-cam Tornado six suffered early on were also fixed, but its reputation problem was unsolvable. As a result, the Tornado was phased out by mid-1965 and AMC's new 232ci six was phased in as the base engine.

The Gladiators were divided into two basic categories: the J-200 group with a 120-inch wheelbase and a variety of GVWRs and the J-300 line with a 126-inch wheelbase and a similar array of GVWRs. Both lines were further designated within their GVWR classes. The J-200 and J-300 were base  $\frac{1}{2}$ -tons with a 4000 or 5000-pound GVWR, respectively. The 210 and 310 models were in the heavy  $\frac{1}{2}$  or light  $\frac{3}{4}$  range with a 5,600 and 6,600-pound GVWR. The 220 and 320 featured a 6,600 and 7,600-pound GVWR and were the full  $\frac{3}{4}$ -ton offerings. Gladiators with the 230 and 330

designation were 8,600-pound-GVWR 1-ton dual-rear-wheel pickup trucks. All but the 230 and 330 had the option of four bed choices (five if you count a chassis cab): the smooth-sided Townside, the step-sided Thriftside, a platform, and a stakeside. The two pickup beds came as 7 or 8-foot beds, depending on the wheelbase. The 230 and 330 were only offered with platform or stake beds, or as a cab-and-chassis design.

Up to about June 1965, the only engine was the Tornado OHC six (140 hp, 210 lb-ft). It was a peppy six, but still a six, so the 250hp, 340-lb-ft 327ci V-8 was a welcome addition. The AMC 232 OHV six was phased at about the same time, and it made 145 hp and 215 lb-ft of torque. The OHC six was backed up by a standard T-90A three-speed column shift in the lower GVWR and a burlier T-89 three-speed in the heavier GVWR. The



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dually trucks came standard with a T-98, which was optional in all the trucks, as was a Borg Warner AS-8W automatic (except in the 1-ton). All transmissions in the trucks were mated to Dana 20 transfer cases.

The 4x4 Gladiators all used a Dana 44-1F, 3,000-pound-rated front axle with 5-lug hubs, except the 230 and 330. The only difference was the hubs for the 6-lug split-ring wheels. In back, the 200, 300, and 210 used 3,500-pound-rated Dana 44 semi-floaters. The others used 4,500 or 5,000-pound-rated Dana 53 semi-floaters, and the duallies used a Dana 70 full-floater with a 7,500-pound rating.

The Gladiator introduced two industry firsts to the American truck world: an overhead cam engine and an optional four-wheel-drive IFS front axle. Neither were anything close to a home run in terms of reliability, but they were still industry firsts. The IFS was designed by Miguel Ordorica and operated a bit like Ford's later Twin Traction Beam. It's far too complex to describe here, but it used a Dana 44-sized center section. The J-Series Wagoneer used a similar setup, but with a Dana 27 center section. It was a \$250 option (about \$1,800 in 2015 dollars), so it wasn't commonly ordered. It was also somewhat problematic, so it was another item dropped in the mid-1965 upgrades.

The Gladiators came in two generations, the '63 to '65.5 and the '65.5 to '70. From '70 on, Jeep was owned by AMC and stopped using the Gladiator name, and the signature grille was gone, but people continued calling them "Gladiators." The early Gladiators are



The short J-200 first-gen Gladiator trucks had a 7-foot bed, and the Thriftside option was about \$30 less than the Townside. You paid for a bed either way, as the base price didn't include it. This truck is still wearing its original Amber paint and rolls on a set of Co-Op tires that are at least 30 years old. For the sixes, the standard axle ratio was 4.27:1 in all but the J230/330, which had a 4.88:1 axle. A Powr-Lok limited slip was available in the rear axle, whether it was a D44, D53, or D70 axle.

marked by the OHC six, optional IFS, and "hundred-series" designations such as J-200, J-300, etc. Production of most first-gen Gladiators stopped early in 1965 (January to February), apparently to retool for the second-gen units that began production in late May and early June with AMC six-cylinder or V-8 engines, without an IFS option or new "thousand-series" names." There were a number of smaller changes and upgrades as well, but

they aren't noteworthy.

In a rapidly expanding pickup truck market and due to Kaiser's limited development budgets, the Gladiator line soon lost its luster and fell behind the times again. Unlike the "Big Three," Jeep couldn't offer major changes every few years. However, they retained a loyal following, and today they are considered one of the most stylish and collectible vintage trucks you can own. ☀



Legendary or infamous? The Tornado OHC six was definitely cutting edge when it debuted in '62, but perhaps it needed another year of testing to eliminate the oil leak problems. Standard with an 8.5:1 compression ratio and a Holley two-barrel carb, it made 140 net horsepower at 4,000 rpm but was a bit underrated. In development, it was rated at 155 hp and 230 lb-ft with a flat torque line to 4,000 rpm. Though not commonly seen, low-compression (7.6:1) single-barrel-carb engines were available and made 133 hp. The Tornado is an epic example of a great idea that was too hastily executed. This engine emigrated to Kaiser's Argentina plant and with a few tweaks, lasted into the early '80s—as a sports car engine, no less. It also served in the '67-'69 Jeep M-715 military truck.



You got a heater, what more do you need? The 4WD and parking brake indicator lights and cigarette lighter were options too, so what are you whining about? The seat and door panels came from a later Gladiator to replace the absolutely nasty pieces present when Riley purchased the truck. Optional were air conditioning, radio, electric clock, and Custom Cab package (that included some dress-up items, a cloth headliner, two visors, padded door panels, and foam padding on the seat).



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# PONY EXPRESS JEEPING

We explore a portion of the famous historic riding trail that brought mail to the West long ago

By Jim Brightly [jpeditor@jpmagazine.com](mailto:jpeditor@jpmagazine.com)  
Photography: Jim Brightly



Just before our first night on the trail, we found a stream to ford and play in.

## Dawn came late to our first campsite, as the sun crept slowly over the near-vertical

walls of Seven-Mile Canyon. It was nearly 7 a.m. before old Sol began warming our tent's walls with enough light to wake us up. We were in Nevada, camped down-canyon from Virginia City just off Six-Mile Canyon Road, and we had to break camp rather quickly to make our assembly point in a Virginia City parking lot on time. Even so, the first day on the trail would see us getting a late start.

Our goal was to explore as much of the route to Rhyolite from Virginia

City (home of the Comstock Lode and *Bonanza*) as we could in the few days we allotted. Since we planned on meeting in town, we camped nearby, and most of us toured Virginia City the day before we were to hit the trail. We kept our eyes peeled for the ghosts of Mark Twain, Little Joe, and Hoss, made a visit to the Mark Twain Museum, and took a mine tour from the Ponderosa Saloon.

Our trailhead was the intersection of U.S. 50 (known as the loneliest highway in America) and Fort Churchill Road, a few miles east of Carson City, Nevada. Fort Churchill Road quickly turns into dirt on its way to the fort and was the start of our 100-mile trek on the Pony Express route.

## Mail Man

Our relatively short trek along the historic route was a mere taste of the full 2,000-mile Pony Express route. Operating for just 18 months from 1860 to 1861, it carried mail, small packages, newspapers, and messages to Sacramento, California, from St. Joseph, Missouri. Its riders crossed the Great Plains, the Rocky Mountains (via South Pass), and the Sierra Nevada in California by horseback, using a series of relay stations placed 12 to 15 miles apart.

Using a specially designed saddle cover called a mochila—Spanish for knapsack or pack—equipped with four pouches, one at each corner, a rider could



Since we had participants coming in from three states, we picked a centrally located parking lot in Virginia City for our final assembly point.



Unfortunately, the day before we set up this first campsite, Nevada had initiated a state-wide ban on open fires. Camping loses half its appeal without a fire.



Just off U.S. 50 on Fort Churchill Road, we aired down for our hundreds of miles of dirt.



Once we crested this hill, we got out to marvel at what the Pony Express riders had to ride over in the dark, in rain, in snow, and once in a while, in hot sunlight.



Intermittent rains kept dust to a minimum along Fort Churchill Road.



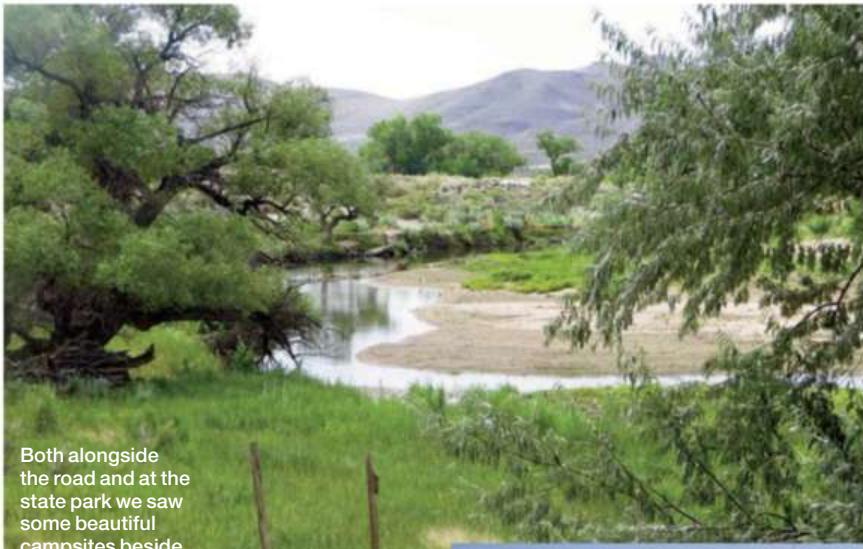
We glimpsed this century-old wood bridge just off the modern road. It looked old enough to have seen Pony Express hooves.

## PONY EXPRESS JEEPING

Just before we reached Fort Churchill Historic State Park, we passed through a U.S. military testing facility and saw several armored vehicles undergoing extended testing on the adjacent hillsides.



All along the Pony Express route we saw ancient buildings made from rock, adobe, and wood.



Both alongside the road and at the state park we saw some beautiful campsites beside the Carson River.



Built in 1860 with adobe bricks and stone foundations, many of the Fort Churchill buildings are still available for exploring.



Adolfo Rodriguez, a fellow Walapai 4 Wheeler, his wife, and two-year-old daughter packed their JK with literally everything but the kitchen sink.



We'd expected to make camp in Rawhide for the first night, but we found a campsite west of Smith Ranch (the current location of the historic Smith Relay Station).



Each morning we'd line up to make sure everyone was ready to leave camp and camp was ready for us to leave.



## PONY EXPRESS JEEPING



Fortunately, we dropped down to the alkali dry lake early in the morning before the sun built the heat up.

Ghost town sites, abandoned mines, and ancient corrals dotted the huge landscape of backcountry Nevada.

There were sloughs and swampy areas along our pathway, but we couldn't tell if they were year-round or sometime-sloughs.



Gold Point is a privately owned ghost town south of Goldfield and just west of U.S. 95. This is an old ore mill.



Gold Point has a working windmill pumping water from a well.



Eddie Ortiz, our trail co-leader, grabs one last photo before hitting the trail for Rhyolite.

### Sidetracked

We had planned on the site of old Rawhide for our first night on the trail, but we were forced to spend our second night there. With 19 vehicles and several with trailers, our speed was much, much slower than we had anticipated. We had also planned on refueling and re-icing at Gabbs, but a fellow traveler told us the station in Gabbs was closed. This forced a detour to Hawthorne, Nevada. Happily, our detour took us through the US Army Depot—known as the world's largest depot of conventional ammunition—so we got a chance to see some of the bunkers up close and personal.

After fueling and icing in Hawthorne, the group voted to take the highway directly to our final campsite in Gold Point, a privately owned and registered ghost town. Since one man owns the entire town, it stands to reason that he also owns the town's only saloon, which he opened for us.

The next day we wrapped up the trip at Rhyolite, Nevada, another registered ghost town about 25 miles south of Beatty. Even though didn't get to run the entire Pony Express route on this trip, we still managed to enjoy a wonderful taste of Western history, and we'll be back for a few more bites. ☺



If you're ever traveling through Beatty and enjoy checking out ghost towns, Rhyolite is a fascinating place to visit and explore.



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will do. When traversing uneven terrain late at night, it's difficult to see over rolling obstacles, and the higher a light source is, the better the light can get over whatever is shadowing the terrain ahead. While bumper-mounted lights offer less wind resistance and often mount more easily, a bumper-mounted light is limited by its height from the ground, and your eyes are probably 2-3 feet above that when sitting in your Jeep. Having an overhead light source will give you the best visibility when exploring at night.

Explorer Pro Comp has come up with an easy, bolt-on solution to the mounting problem with its new JK windshield mounts that allow a roof-mounted LED lightbar to fit on top without interfering with the removable hard top or soft top.

Naturally, Pro Comp tailored the mounts around its own DR48 lightbar (dual-row 48-inch bar with 96 LEDs), but we're guessing these windshield frame brackets will fit some other lights, too. We're hoping to see some TJ (maybe even YJ and CJ) mounts later down the road, but for now, Explorer Pro Comp is focusing on newer vehicle applications.

Is the light as impressive as anything we've ever lit up? Actually, it is. Having more money in overhead LED lighting than we had into our entire first Jeep really does make a difference. In fact, this Pro Comp 48-inch LED lightbar is going to cost us our "didn't see it" excuses that we like to use when wheeling late at night.



Explorer Pro Comp's windshield mount kit (PN EXP75300) is only made for one Jeep right now: the '07-'14 JK Wrangler. The brackets are made out of thick,  $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch steel and powdercoated black for corrosion resistance. The unique round end-nuts require the supplied adapter (or a really big Allen wrench) to tighten or loosen them and provide some security to the light.



The windshield brackets go directly against the painted windshield frame, so we added some foam tape to provide protection to the paint.



The EPC (Explorer Pro Comp) brackets bolt directly into the lower five bolts (per side) that are on the windshield frame.

# OVERHEAD LEDS

**Bolt-on windshield  
mount lightbar**

By Jerrod Jones  
[jpeditor@jpmagazine.com](mailto:jpeditor@jpmagazine.com)  
Photography: Jerrod Jones





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### OVERHEAD LEDS



After placing the EPC LED lightbar mount and getting each bolt to thread, leave them loosely in place, as the brackets will squeeze onto the mounting studs on each side of the EPC DR48 lightbar.

**Explorer Pro Comp's DR48 is rated to put out 19,200 lumens**

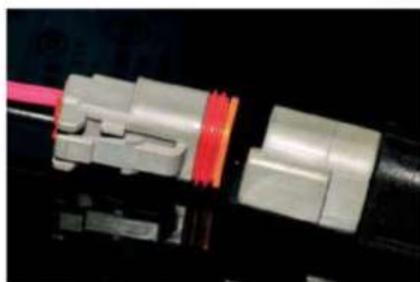


The special round end-nuts tighten the DR48 light bar into place using the supplied adapter tool. This is one of those "Dangit, where did I put that?!" tools like a splined lug nut adapter that you will lose in that black hole you call a center console. A large Allen wrench will also work perfectly.

Explorer Pro Comp's DR48 dual-row lightbar is packed with 96 Cree LEDs that require 240 watts. The bar measures out to be 49.75 inches long, 2.75 inches tall, and 2.875 inches deep. It has an IP68 certification and is rated to put out 19,200 raw lumens. The anodized polyester powdercoat finish on the extruded aluminum housing is said to provide protection in any environment. That's a good thing too, since the LEDs have more than 50,000 hours of life. Your Jeep may get sold before your LED lights die.



This is where a friend comes in handy. The LED lightbar needs to be placed in the brackets and held while the five factory windshield bolts are tightened up, squeezing the brackets onto the lightbar.



Plugging in the light is a simple one-connector hookup. Of course, you'll have to put a red and black wire on the positive and negative battery terminals and run a wired switch through the firewall, but that's for the wiring harness install. We'll have that install story in an upcoming issue—wait for it.



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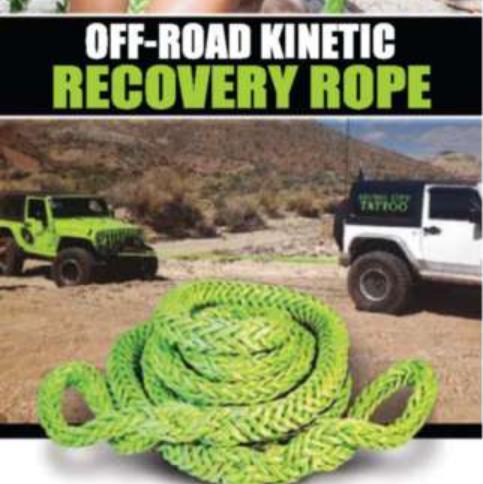
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## OVERHEAD LEDS



Here's where things get sloppy. There is really no solution given for running the wires to the lightbar. You could pinch them in the hardtop or the door frame (not a good plan) and run them inside and back out again; you could drill holes in your windshield frame and tub; or you could just do like we did and run them down the body seam and under the hood where a rubber seal pinches them. It's not ideal, but this will work until we get out a drill and get really tricky.



Between the security nut and the fact that you'd have to remove all five windshield bolts to get a bracket loose, it would take some time for a thief to get this light. We're not saying to park in a bad area and test the theory, but someone would need to have the right tools and some time to steal this LED lightbar from EPC's windshield mount brackets.

The DR48 LED lightbar gives usable light to a distance of 1,525 meters, with a 60-meter spread (30 meters per side) in front of your Jeep.



While the light performance is outstanding, it doesn't take long for you to figure out that your four-figure investment can leave you with a ringing in your ears over 40 mph. While that could put a damper on things, we had no worries thanks to a Rock Sock from Mercenary Offroad. The stretchable neoprene (wetsuit-like) material has a large zipper that makes the Rock Sock pretty easy to install with one person.



With a 20-second Rock Sock install, we were able to stop any whistling attributed to the overhead lightbar. ☺

### Sources

**Pro Comp USA**, 800/776-0767, [procompusa.com](http://procompusa.com)

**Mercenary Offroad**, 818/653-6637, [mercenaryoffroad.com](http://mercenaryoffroad.com)



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Lenses with Amber  
L.E.D.'s Located Under Front  
Headlights



264135CL 264135BK  
Jeep 07-15 JK Wrangler  
Round Front Fender  
Lenses with Amber  
L.E.D.'s Located on Front  
Side Fender

## LED TAIL LIGHTS JEEP WRANGLER 07-15



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264234BK Smoked  
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264234RD Red



## LED 3RD BRAKE LIGHT JEEP WRANGLER 07-15

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## **While driving a '05 Rubicon Unlimited from the dealership in New Hampshire where it**

was purchased as a “used” vehicle to our place of residence in Arizona, we had many hours to contemplate the future of this new-to-us Jeep TJ Wrangler. We wanted this rig in a bad way because it’s the first of the “Rubicon” Unlimited (two-door, longer wheelbase) models with the Dana 44s front and rear, but it’s not a JK with almost everything under the sun run by a computer. Even though it’s not brand new, it has been for the most part unmolested and was in excellent condition.

We discovered on the drive to Arizona that while a factory soft top—even a 10-year-old one—can do a lot to keep the weather out (and a 2,500-mile trip across the United States in November will bring many different types of weather), it can’t keep road and wind noise out. With the cruise control set at the speed limit, we were able to hear the radio but not enjoy it, and we were forced to holler to be heard. We like conversation, listening to books on CD, and music while traveling. The soft top had to be replaced.

The first stop after we got home was the local Jeep dealership to check on the price for a factory hardtop. What a shock! The ballpark figure was \$3,000.

The '05 Rubicon Unlimited with the Rally Tops black hardtop stays warmer and quieter and offers greater security for valuable items inside your Jeep than the OEM soft top.

We couldn’t get an exact number because the counter clerk didn’t want to look up the prices for each individual component and told us there isn’t a part number for a complete top. That sent me to the Internet, where I found Rally Tops in Gardena, California.

Just up the block from Shelby American’s assembly plant, Rally Tops’ small facility houses some masters of their respective professions. We found in-house design, fiberglass fabrication, painting—the works. Jerry Mancini, owner of Rally Tops, designs and builds one-piece fiberglass hardtops for all models of Jeeps from the CJ-5 all the way up to the ’15 Wrangler four-door models, including Scramblers.

OEM tops for Jeeps with optional hardtops are multi-pieced tops. You’ll notice grooves down both sides of the OEM tops where the pieces are glued together. Rally Tops’ hardtops are one piece. This makes them stronger and lighter than their OEM counterparts. Rally Tops’ product is also fully insulated inside with carpeting, something the OEM tops don’t have.

The option list for Rally Tops’ hardtops includes a sunroof, roof rack, and sliding side windows. As far as I know, the only option on an OEM top is a rear wiper, and OEM tops have never included sliding side windows. You

# **ONE STOP TOP SHOP**

**From CJs to JKs, Rally Tops has a hardtop that fits like a glove and looks like a million**

**By Jim Brightly  
*jpeditor@jpmagazine.com*  
Photography: Jim Brightly**





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## ONE STOP TOP SHOP

There is no lock or handle on the rear window of the Rally Top hardtop. The rear window is secured by the lockable tailgate.



With the zippers on their last legs and the windows fogged, the old top was dumped.



The only thing we saved were the plastic door surrounds in case we decide to buy another soft top in the next few years.



The 10-year-old OEM soft top had faded, the windows were permanently fogged, and the zippers were very difficult to use. It was noisy too!



Ramon Castillon (left) and Jessie Contreras remove the soft top at the Rally Tops shop.



Jessie and Ramon make sure the Jeep is clean and ready to accept the new hardtop.

can also order half hard doors with soft uppers from Rally Tops.

The full-length top for our '05 Rubicon Unlimited weighed just 138 pounds and cost about \$2,000. That includes the roof rack (150-pound capacity) and sliding side windows. Because of the Arizona sun, we didn't opt for the sunroof. Although other colors are available, we chose black to stay as close to OEM colors as I could.

Believe us, the trip home from Southern California was much more comfortable than the trip there. We were able to listen to the radio without blasting out the speakers, and we could speak in normal voices and hear each other, even at 75 mph. We did, however, notice a wind hum from the roof rack. The heavy tint on the windows kept headlights behind us from blinding the driver, and headroom in the Rally Top hardtop is more than enough, even with the Buchanan 1½-inch seat risers in place.



Rally Tops warns against lifting its hardtop by the roof rack. The roof rack is designed to hold 150 pounds on the roof, not to hold the weight of the top.

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## ONE STOP TOP SHOP



The new top is lifted and carried to the awaiting Jeep.



Mancini checks our Jeep's appearance and the Rally Top's fit. The top is secured with four bolts on each side.



Fitment is checked on the front and rear of the Rally top before final attachment.



A piece of scrap from the production process shows the double-layer fiberglass (for strength and light weight) and glued-in carpet layer (for sound and temperature insulation).



Packaged and palletized for shipment, a new Rally Top is ready to be sent to a new owner.



The front of the Rally Top needs to be settled into place before the top could be bolted down.



In front the top is secured to the windshield frame with factory-like clamps. The orange U-bracket is for the windshield's tie-down strap.

### Source

**Rally Tops**, 800/664-8677,  
[rallytops.com](http://rallytops.com)



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725MB  
DOMINATOR

718B  
BLACKJACK

713MB  
DOUBLE PUMP

## Daystar JK hood vent

By Sue Majich

jpeditor@jpmagazine.com

Photography: Sue Majich

**No matter** which vehicle you drive, under-hood heat can be a problem. Out here in the

California desert, we have to really pay attention to our vehicle's temperatures. While a radiator that's clean and has adequate capacity is the best way to keep your engine cool, low speeds can let the heat build up under your hood to a point that it overcomes the cooling system. Cool air to the intake can also help your engine's power output. As air cools, it condenses, allowing more oxygen intake per cycle of the engine. The engines oxygen sensor senses this and injects more fuel to compensate for the increased

oxygen levels. Yes, we know it isn't much, but the anemic 3.8L engine in our JK can use all the help it can get. This isn't going to be real good for your fuel economy, but then again, economy isn't usually real high on the priority list when you're running on 37-inch tires.

Unless you have one of the special editions, such as the Rubicon 10th Anniversary, your factory hood will be just like our '11 JK Rubicon. It's nothing more than a formed sheet of metal that encloses your engine to keep the elements out. Unfortunately, that same sheet of metal that keeps the elements out, also keeps most of the heat in. Daystar's new hood vent is a great solution for venting some of that heat, while still keeping the elements out. It works by drawing the hot air up from the front of the hood, through the cowl, and out the vents towards the rear of the hood. Seat of the pants testing (translated as sitting in traffic) shows us that it does a pretty darn good job of it too. There was visible heat shimmer coming out of the vents, and your hand

would warm up real quick when held in front of it. We also noticed that the electric engine fan was not kicking in quite as often. Although Daystar recommends painting before installation, we really liked the contrast of the black on red. If you're going to do the same, though, give it a good wipe down with a glass cleaner before you install it. We didn't, and the left over residue from the manufacturing process was a real pain to get off once it was installed. While Daystar includes two-sided tape to attach the side vent covers, we chose to use silicone to glue them in place. We did have to slightly trim the edges, but with some care, a razor cleaned up the injection molded edges and allowed us to get a nice tight fit. One other really cool feature is the second windshield wiper nozzle. Instead of the single nozzle in the center of the hood, Daystar includes a second nozzle and the needed tubing, so that you have one on each side of the cowl. It was kind of a pain to install, but worth it in the end.

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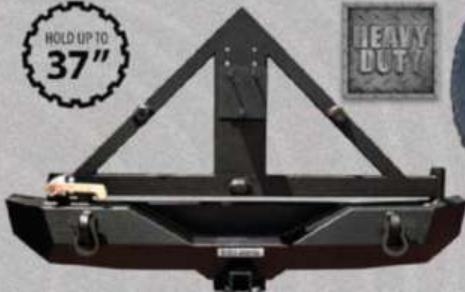


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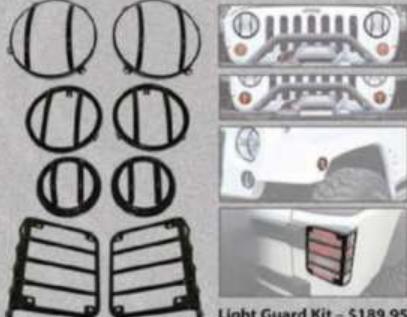
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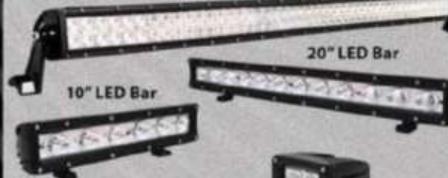
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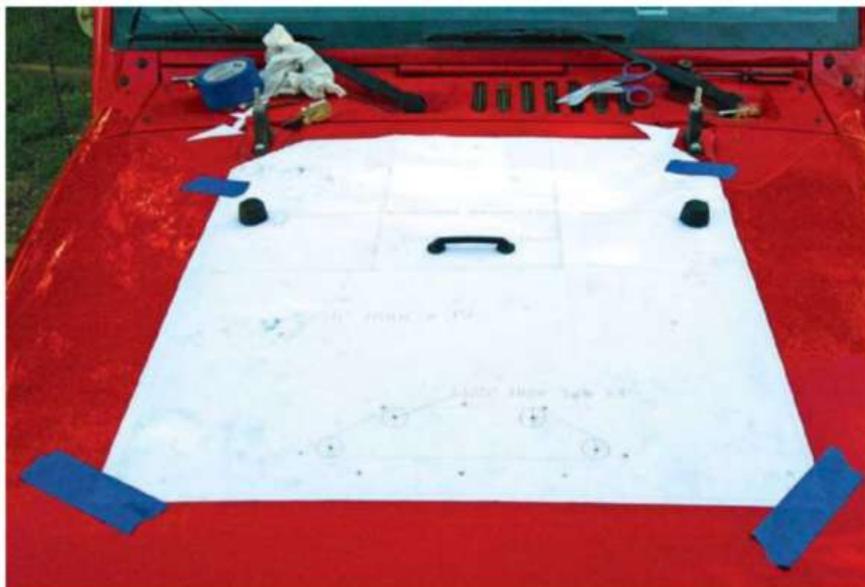


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## RELEASE THE HEAT



Daystar includes a well-laid-out template for drilling all of the holes. Using the windshield bumpers and the footman loop as fixed points, the template made locating the bolt holes extremely easy.



It's a good idea to use a pilot bit to start. All you need is a hole just big enough to keep the hole saw from wandering around. Our mental block was probably the hardest part of the whole install. Even we don't like drilling this many holes in new sheet metal.

---

**We don't like  
drilling holes in  
new sheet metal.**

---

### Source

**Daystar**, 800/595-7659,  
[daystarweb.com](http://daystarweb.com)



Since we already had our pilot holes drilled, it was a simple matter of punching a 1½-inch hole in each corner where the vent would go. One important thing is that when using power tools, always wear safety glasses. Obviously someone had a bit of a lapse here.



This was a lot easier than it looked. With those gaping holes we already drilled in the hood, cutting out the sheet metal between them was no big deal. Use a straight edge to mark the lines and connect the dots.

Once we got done turning our hood into Swiss cheese, we sprayed a little paint on it to keep rust away and bolted the cowl on. The screws were a little on the short side, but we got them on with a little persuasion here and there. This is definitely an install that's easier to do with a helper available. ☺



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# CATCHING UP (WITH KATIE)



## Why you want to attend open house events in your area

By Katie  
[jpeditor@jpmagazine.com](mailto:jpeditor@jpmagazine.com)  
Photography: Levi Jansma

## How many parents have a hard time going to Jeep events? Aren't sure if you

can take the kids with you? I have a list of events that I know I can take my girls to where there won't be any issues to worry about. Yes, I really have a list. Why? My girls love to go to off-road events just to see a bunch of built Jeeps in a shop or to spend a few days out on the trail with other people that love Jeeping as much as us. It's a family affair for us. If you invite me to an event, you get all four of us. That's how

it works in my family.

Speaking of events, I had the chance to be present at the Colorado Northridge4x4 2nd Annual Open House. When I say present, I really mean spent four to five hours in the Jeep one way with a four- and six-year-old. Thank goodness for headphones and LeapPads. Otherwise I may have been pegged on the crazy meter by the end of the day.

The invitation came from Oliver and Tim who work out of the Colorado Northridge4x4 store. We met at All-4-Fun Week 2014. Northridge4x4 had several companies come out to support its Open House, ranging from big names like American Expedition Vehicles, TeraFlex, Truck-Lite, to smaller companies like a tasty BBQ joint named House of Q BBQ & Brew. If you ever get to Longmont, Colorado, you must check it out.

This was an awesome event to take my girls to. If you are really worried about taking kids to an event, keep in mind that a large number of people that attend these sort of events have children and understand

the meltdowns and boredom that young children can experience. Northridge4x4 had coloring books on hand just for the little Jeepers. My girls don't always want to walk around with me asking questions about this product or that service and need something to keep them occupied.

However, the best part of this open house (or any, for that matter) was meeting all the employees so that I can put a face to the person I'm talking to on the phone later. It's a great way for you to build relationships with the people at the local shops you're going to be working with, which is something you definitely want when it is your Jeep they're working on. Another great part about attending an open house is that you meet lots of fellow Jeepers. So next time your local off-road shop has one, get on down there and make some new friends. ☺

## Source

**Northridge4x4**, 866/601-5340,  
[northridge4x4.com](http://northridge4x4.com)

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# NEW PRODUCTS

By John Cappa  
[jpeditor@jpmagazine.com](mailto:jpeditor@jpmagazine.com)



## Far Off Fueling

Need more range from your '07-current Jeep JK Wrangler? GenRight Off Road has developed a 25-gallon fuel tank to get you farther between fill-ups. This new tank assembly is relocated to the rear muffler area of your Jeep and mounts in a way that still works with your factory fuel filler. The GenRight tank even re-uses your factory fuel pump module so all of your Jeep's emissions equipment remains intact. With the original fuel tank removed, there is now room for a true triangulated four-link rear suspension. Each tank is made from TIG-welded  $\frac{1}{8}$ -inch-thick aluminum with a  $\frac{3}{16}$ -inch-thick heavy-duty steel skid plate. A stainless steel hold-down strap keeps the tank in place. All tanks are 100 percent pressure tested and come with new factory Mopar rollover/vent valves. **Information:** GenRight Off Road, 805/584-8635, genright.com



## More Light

If you've run out of places to add more off-road lighting, OR-Fab may have the solution with the new Cowl LED Light Bar Mount. This mount allows Jeep JK Wrangler owners to fit a 40-inch LED light-bar just above the cowl. The heavy-duty light-bar mounts are made in the U.S.A and manufactured from laser-cut 3/16-inch-thick steel. They attach to the Jeep's A-pillar body-to-window frame braces using the factory mounting bolts. OR-Fab JK Cowl Mount LED Brackets are available in a gloss or wrinkled black powdercoat finish and fit '07-'15 Jeep JK Wranglers. The mounting position is said to not interfere with the operation of the factory hood and windshield wipers. **Information:** OR-Fab, 928/636-7080, orfab.com



## Power Anywhere

The Eastwood Company now offers an affordable line of portable generators. The line consists of the Eastwood 7500 Watt Generator and 3000 Watt Generator, plus Reliance Transfer Switches. The new portable generators feature heavy-duty commercial engines that are CARB/EPA certified, making both units legal in all 50 states. Both generators feature pure copper-wound heads for increased reliability when running at full load for extended periods of time. Each generator comes with a two-year limited warranty. The 7500 Watt Portable Generator features a running output of 7,200 watts and a start-up output of 7,500 watts, while the 3000 Watt model features a running output of 2,800 watts and a start-up output of 3,000 watts. **Information:** The Eastwood Company, 800/343-9353, eastwood.com



## Hot Spark

Looking for a hotter spark for your Hemi V-8 or swapped-in Ford or GM engine? ACCEL has more than a dozen new high-performance SuperCoil applications available. Supercoils are said to provide up to 15 percent more spark energy for improved throttle response and performance. ACCEL SuperCoils can be installed with simple hand tools and claim to use the latest in engineering design with optimized windings to maximize energy output, resulting in improved or restored vehicle performance and increased fuel mileage. SuperCoils are available individually or in multi-packs of four, six, and eight coils for different engine applications. **Information:** ACCEL, 216/658-6413, accel-ignition.com



## Famous Seating

Want to sit your butt in the same seats that six-time Lucas Oil Off Road Championship winner and 16-time X-Games medalist Brian Deegan uses? Now you can, with the PRP Deegan 38 Pre-Runner fixed-back full-suspension seat. It's designed for daily driving, yet offers enough containment to keep you in place off-road. It features Deegan-inspired design, mid-side bolsters, and a hidden stash pocket to keep your money, wallet, or other valuables. The Deegan 38 Pre-Runner seat is available with trim in yellow, red, or dark gray. A reclining version will be available soon. UTV models are also available. **Information:** PRP Seats, 800/317-6253, prpseats.com



## Retractor

The new Corbeau three-point-retractable harness belts make using harness-style seat belts much more convenient. Most harnesses lock you in your seat with almost no ability to move for shifting, changing the radio station, adjusting the mirrors, and so on. The Corbeau retractable belts feature an inertia reel to allow your harness belt to function just like your stock seat belts. This gives you the ability to move around in your Jeep. Sudden movements will cause the belts to lock. There is even a knob that allows you to change your belt from retractable mode to full-time harness mode. The Corbeau retractable harness is available in a variety of colors. **Information:** Corbeau, 801/255-3737, corbeau.com

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The latest from Pro Comp is the Phaser Series 41 wheel. This race-inspired wheel features a split six-window design that is said to be strong enough to withstand whatever you throw at it while still remaining lightweight. The Phaser is made from counter pressure-cast aluminum and has a reinforced lip with a simulated beadlock. High-grade stainless steel hardware jewels the outer edge. The Phaser is available in 17, 18, and 20-inch diameters with your choice of a machined face or a complete satin-black finish. **Information:** Pro Comp, 800/776-0767, procompusa.com



### Cover Up

CalTrend introduces the Tough Camo seat covers to protect your factory seats. The Tough Camo covers are said to be the most rugged, stain-, water-, and abrasion-resistant camouflage seat covers available in the marketplace. They feature a lacquered topcoat for durability, yet are said to maintain a soft and comfortable feel. Tough Camo covers are available in two prints: Camo-Marsh and Camo-Woods. In addition to high-abrasion resistance, Tough Camo covers provide protection from accidental punctures, moisture, and mildew, and the material is resistant to cold cracking, stains, and UV exposure. Tough Camo covers are also flame-resistant and have unique antibacterial and antimicrobial properties. The covers are made right here in the U.S.A. and are custom tailored for a variety of popular applications. **Information:** CalTrend, 800/846-8621, caltrend.com

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## A-Pillar Gauges

Auto Meter now offers Jeep JK Pillar Pods. The Pillar Pods provide an easy way to install aftermarket gauges on the '07-current Jeep Wrangler A-pillar. This puts the gauges in the driver's field of view without obstructing outward visibility. Several applications are available in both one and two-gauge versions. The Pillar Pods are designed to house common 2½-inch gauges. Pillar Pods are made in the U.S.A. from high-quality ABS plastic and are said to be designed to fit just like the factory pieces they replace. **Information:** Auto Meter, 866/248-6356, autometer.com

An advertisement for Garvin Wilderness Products featuring four Jeeps (Wranglers) driving through a rocky terrain. The text "LEAVE NOTHING BEHIND" is at the top, and the Garvin logo with "WILDERNESS PRODUCTS™" is in the center. To the right is a "MADE IN THE USA" star logo and contact information: [WWW.WILDERNESSRACKS.COM](http://WWW.WILDERNESSRACKS.COM) and 619.440.7415.

## TH400 Protection

Is your Jeep running a TH400, the king of automatic transmissions? If so, as with any automatic transmission, heat is a serious concern. The hotter the transmission gets, the shorter its life will be. Tilden Motorsports developed a solution with the TH400 Pro Series transmission oil pan. It offers three additional quarts of fluid capacity over stock, has integrated cooling tubes, an integrated sealing ring to protect against leaks, and an integrated ½-inch skidplate for added protection. Tilden claims that a 20-50 degree reduction in transmission fluid temperatures is not uncommon.

**Information:** Tilden Motorsports, 408/600-0122, tildenmotorsports.com

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Are you building a product that the Jeep world needs to know about? Take a high resolution digital picture (at least 1,600 by 1,200 pixels) and email it along with a brief description of the product to [jpeditor@jpmagazine.com](mailto:jpeditor@jpmagazine.com). Or, snail mail it to:

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An advertisement for M.O.R.E. Bomb Proof Motor Mounts. The headline is "BOMB PROOF MOTOR MOUNTS". It features a testimonial from Jason Kaminsky: "I've run M.O.R.E. Bomb Proof Motor Mounts and Block Brackets for close to ten years without any issues. They survived many flops and roll-overs during that time." Below the testimonial are two men standing outdoors, and images of the motor mount kit and a block bracket.

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# JEEP SHOTS

By Ali Mansour  
jpeditor@jmpmagazine.com



## Evolving Rubi

Skip Lennon's '08 Wrangler Unlimited Rubicon is outfitted with a bevy of high-end aftermarket wares. The original short-arm suspension was replaced by a complete long-arm system from TeraFlex, and the front coils ditched in favor of an EVO Manufacturing coilover conversion. EVO Rock Skins, sliders, and  $\frac{1}{4}$ -pounder front bumper make up the majority of the armor, while a Warn winch acts as a convenient recovery tool. To get more performance out of the 37-inch BFG KM2 tires, Lennon purchased a set of 17-inch Walker Evans beadlock wheels.



## Worth The Wait

After waiting 70 years, John Russell of Green Valley, Arizona, bought his first Jeep and subscribed to *Jp* magazine. His '11 Wrangler Sahara sits on a 2-inch AEV suspension with 33-inch Goodyear all-terrain tires. To give the 3.8L V-6 engine some extra ponies, an Airaid intake and DynoMax exhaust was added on. Rugged Ridge bumpers protect both ends, and a Rugged Ridge winch was installed as a handy recovery aid. Russell states that the JK is mostly used for exploring the many abandoned mines and ghost towns in the Arizona desert.



## Born To Jeep

This green machine belongs to William Devers III of Gales Ferry, Connecticut. The '11 Wrangler Unlimited's powertrain remains mostly stock, with the exception of a MBRP exhaust system. A TeraFlex 1½-inch lift makes room for the 35x12.50 Goodyear MT/Rs mounted on 15x8 MB Motoring wheels. Devers states that he started his *Jp* subscription the day his son was born. He says the day this photo was taken his son proclaimed, "I love daddy's Jeep," and proceeded to give the front bumper a hug.

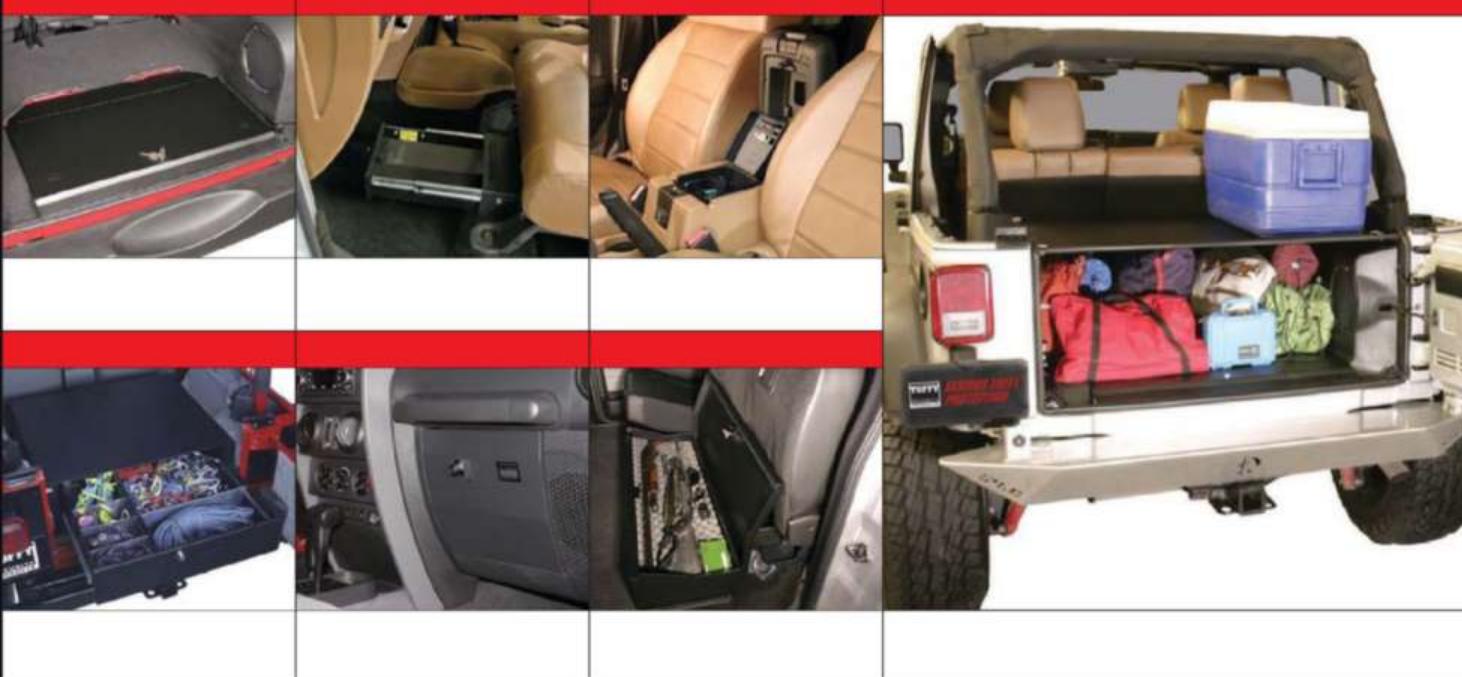


## Man Country

Albert Peters of Winkler, Manitoba, Canada, enjoys time in the backcountry with his '04 Wrangler. The TJ is powered by a 4.0L inline-six engine, which was upgraded with a K&N air intake and Banks Power exhaust system. Suspension needs were handled by a Rough Country 4-inch lift, which allow ample clearance for the 33x12.50 Mickey Thompson Baja Claw TTC Radial tires. Future upgrades include higher numerical differential gears, which should help the daily driven wheeler perform even better on- and off-road.

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The website features a top navigation bar with links for 'HOME', 'ABOUT', 'CONTACT', 'LOG IN', and 'SIGN UP'. Below this is a main menu with categories: 'FORUMS', 'DRIVE TESTS', 'PHOTOS', 'VIDEOS', 'REVIEWS', 'CARDS', and 'SHOP'. The main content area includes a large image of a red off-road vehicle, a 'Jp MAGAZINE' section, and a 'COMMUNITY FEED' with user statistics: 185 MEMBERS and 1,325 COMMUNITIES. To the right, there's a 'MOST RECENT ARTICLES' sidebar with links to '2012 Toyota 4Runner SR5', '2012 GMC Sierra 1500', and '2012 Ford F-150 SuperCrew'. The overall design is clean with a white background and a yellow header bar.

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## JEEP SHOTS



### Yell Oh!

Rob Luther uses his '77 CJ-5 mainly for cruising and light wheeling around his home in Orlando, Florida. The 360ci AMC V-8 was upgraded with a Holley 650 carburetor and Edelbrock Performer Series intake manifold. The T-18 transmission is paired with a Dana 20 transfer case, which splits power to the International Scout-sourced Dana 44 axles. Front and rear Spartan Lockers help the 35-inch Interco Super Swamper tires take a bite. Up front, the custom bumper holds a Warn winch, while a Rock Hard 4x4 rear bumper totes the spare tire.



### Father & Son

The clean '85 CJ-7 you see pictured here belongs to Command Sergeant Major (retired) Bob Pion of Manassas, Virginia. After purchasing the CJ from the original owner, Pion began modifying the Jeep as time allowed. To get more power, he swapped out the original engine and replaced it with a 4.0L from a '98 Cherokee. A Dana 300 transfer case splits power to the AMC 10 rear and Dana 30 front axle, both of which were upgraded with 4.10 differential gears and Lock-Right lockers. Adding height is a set of 2½-inch-lift BDS Suspension leaf springs along with a 1-inch body lift. Custom bumpers work with armor from Poison Spyder Customs to protect the body on the trail. The OR-Fab sport 'cage is there just in case all four 33x12.50 BFG Mud-Terrains tires point skyward.

Parked next to the CJ is his son's '99 Cherokee. After totaling his previous '98 XJ, he used the money from parting out the wrecked Jeep to build his current ride. A 3-inch Rough Country lift helps clear 31-inch Kumho Road Venture tires, and JCR front and rear bumpers increase protection. ♦

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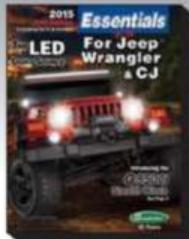
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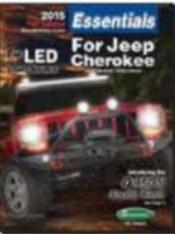
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# YOUR JEEP

By John Cappa  
[jpcditor@jpmagazine.com](mailto:jpcditor@jpmagazine.com)



## Perfect Jeep Replacement

I want your opinion and thoughts on the "perfect" Jeep for my situation. The year, model, and so on doesn't matter as long as it's an automatic. This Jeep will be mostly used by my wife. It will be used mostly on-road. It has to be something reliable enough to be driven across the country if need be, but strong enough for getting through the Colorado snow and a trail or two. She is currently driving a '88 Grand Wagoneer and loves it, but it's pretty much worn out and needs to be replaced.

Doug Bridges  
Estes Park, Colorado

You didn't specify if you wanted a used vehicle or a new one. Given the size, weight, and capability of the vehicle she is currently driving, I think the '99-'04 Grand Cherokee is a good choice if you are looking for a used, higher-mileage Jeep. The 4.0L inline-six engine will hold up better than the much more complex 4.7L V-8 over the long term. The '05-current Grand Cherokee is also a solid choice. Several different engines were available during that time period. In no particular order, I would put the EcoDiesel 3.0L V-6, the Pentastar 3.6L V-6, and the 5.7L Hemi as my top engine picks. For fuel economy, go with the EcoDiesel. For a compromise on fuel economy and power, go with the Pentastar. And for pure muscle and hauling capability, get the Hemi.

Another option that many past Jeep owners have embraced is the '07-current four-door Wrangler Unlimited. If you were to go that route, I would recommend getting the '12-current version with the Pentastar 3.6L V-6 engine. The extra 83 hp and interior amenities will be worth it.

## Tranny Troubles

I have a '00 TJ Wrangler Sahara with a 4.0L inline-six and an automatic transmission that will not go into Third gear correctly. The torque converter will not lock up unless I let completely off the throttle or modulate it. It happens anytime the Jeep sits for a day or more. After a few miles, everything starts working fine. The service manual says the lockup converter only comes into play for Third gear. No one

will touch this 32RH for a rebuild, and I only found one used online for over \$1,000. No codes have ever been tripped and the tranny works flawless except for no kick-down when I floor it. I'd hate to replace the transmission with only 124,000 miles on it. I recently read an article in *Jp* about replacing the converter.

Do I risk just replacing the converter (which I can get) or go for a used tranny? I know these things don't last much over 120,000 miles, but mine has never had a hard life.

Ray Beeson  
Apple Valley, CA

*That's a tough call. Clearly there is something that isn't working right. It could be any number of things or multiple problems. My best advice would be to let a competent transmission shop take a look at your Jeep. Someone who knows what they are looking at will have a much easier time figuring out what is going on. I once had a transmission that I was sure was toast. It had all the signs that something had been smoked inside. It was slipping and would not shift properly. I started with the simple stuff myself, checking vacuum lines and electrical connections, and found nothing out of place. I took it to a competent shop where they dropped the tranny pan to take a closer look. They found that several of the transmission valve body bolts had come loose. They tightened them up, changed the fluid and filter, and the transmission worked as good as new. Now, I'm not saying that's what's wrong with your transmission—it likely isn't. However, getting your transmission in the hands of someone that runs into these problems often is a good bet, especially because you have more than one issue. Simply tossing in a new converter may solve the problem with the lockup issue, but you could be pumping metal bits through your brand-new part if the transmission has other issues. Give all of the transmission wiring, plugs, hoses, and other connections a good looking-over first. Then head to the shop if you can't find any problems.*

## Suspension and Engine Options

I have been a CJ man all my life. I have a girlfriend with three kids, so I eventually let my Jeeps go, but I have a few bad disks in my back. I like the simplicity of the CJ, but the ride is a little too harsh for me now. Is a coil-spring suspension that much better? Can I put coils under a CJ? Can a TJ's running gear bolt up to a CJ body? What do you think is the best six-cylinder for a daily driver that sees light to medium trail duties, the 4.2L, 4.0L, or maybe a 4.3L

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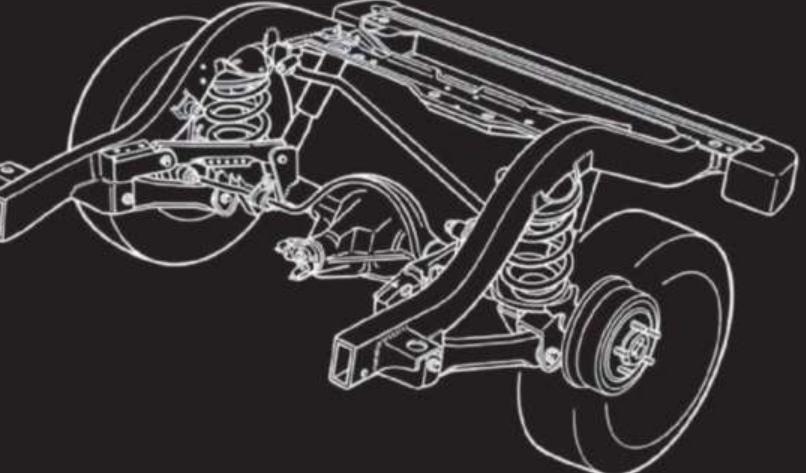
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## YOUR JEEP

Chevy V-6? Does the left/right front pinion position cause any problems?

Mike  
Via email

The simple answer is yes: the coil-sprung Jeeps ride a lot better than the old leaf-sprung CJs. However, it is totally possible to screw up the ride of a coil-sprung TJ or JK by installing the wrong lift kit and shocks for how you plan to use the Jeep. In your case, I would stick with smaller lifts and lightly valved or adjustable shocks set to the softest setting.



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You can put coils under a CJ; however, it would be very cost prohibitive. They will not simply bolt in. It would require the fabrication of a completely custom suspension. For about the same price of that custom suspension, you could buy a good used Jeep TJ Wrangler.

As for the engine, it's hard to beat the reliability and performance of the Jeep 4.0L. However, the inline-six is based on a 50-plus-year-old design. If we are talking about swapping engines into a CJ, for best all-around performance and fuel economy, I think you might be better off with a modern fuel-injected 4.3L GM V-6. Really, though; either of these two engines are good choices. The 4.2L inline-six is simply too antiquated. It would cost quite a bit to install fuel injection, a modern ignition, and so on. The resulting performance would be less impressive than a more modern and less expensive fuel-injected 4.0L.

A CJ frame can be made to accept a driver-side drop front axle and drivetrain fairly easily, but it's not a simple bolt-in procedure. Fabrication, cutting, and welding would be required to complete an engine, transmission, transfer case, and axle swap of this magnitude.

### Cooling Flatfenders

I am building a flattie. It has a 4.1L Buick engine in it. Does the M38 grille have more radiator room than a typical flatfender?

William Lawson  
[Via facebook.com/JohnCappa4x4](http://facebook.com/JohnCappa4x4)

The M38, CJ-2A, and CJ-3A all have about the same space for a radiator. Unfortunately, the large, 7-inch round headlights and the factory headlight buckets take up a lot of space behind the grille. The MB/GPW grille offers more radiator room. The headlights are smaller and the grille has nine open slats instead of seven, offering more surface area and potential airflow. However, the factory flip-up MB/GPW headlight buckets take



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## YOUR JEEP

up a lot of space and can get in the way in some cases. In all cases, I've found that you can fit a larger radiator if you don't use the factory headlight buckets—or at least trim them. No matter what grille you choose, you'll likely need to remove or modify the stock shrouding that is spot-welded to the backside of the grille.

How large of a radiator you can fit will be dependent upon many factors. The engine location, steering linkage and shaft, and whether or not you have the factory front crossmember are all important variables. It's possible to fit a 27-inch-wide by

16-inch-tall universal aluminum two-core radiator behind a flatfender grille with trimmed headlight buckets. Flex-a-lite (flex-a-lite.com), Griffin Thermal Products (griffinrad.com), and Summit Racing (summitracing.com) offer many different universal radiators that can be made to work. I've actually been eyeballing the smaller 24x15.5-inch Griffin Combo Unit (PN CU-25201-XS) for one of my flatfender projects. It is rated for up to 400 hp and comes with an electric fan and fan shroud.

The engine location is key. On some engines, like the Chevy small-block you



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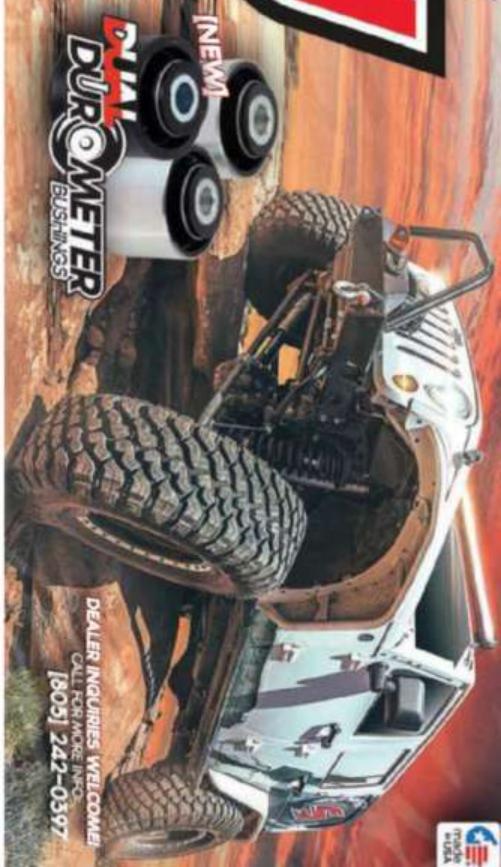
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# SIDEWAYS

By Tori Tellem  
jpeditor@jmpmagazine.com

## Stuck Edition

### Biggest Ops Ever

This epic fail came courtesy of Jennifer Cilento, who said it was her husband's "biggest oopsie ever." It all started with them on a trail at Peacock Flats in Hawaii with the Oahu Jeepers. "Our back wheel started to slip and Chris slammed it into Reverse to keep us from going end over end. We just rolled back nice and slow and gently tipped over." Until that moment, Jennifer never liked four-wheeling. After that moment, Jennifer liked four-wheeling.

### Drowned M-715

Mike Hold of Mesa, Arizona, and his Jeep buddies came across what he called a "water tank" in the middle of the Arizona desert. "These tanks are formed to retain water for livestock and the many desert critters. One of our group figured the water was not too deep and it would be fun to run through it."



### Muck Stuck

The only thing Arthur Dudzinski told us about this pic: "That wasn't supposed to happen."

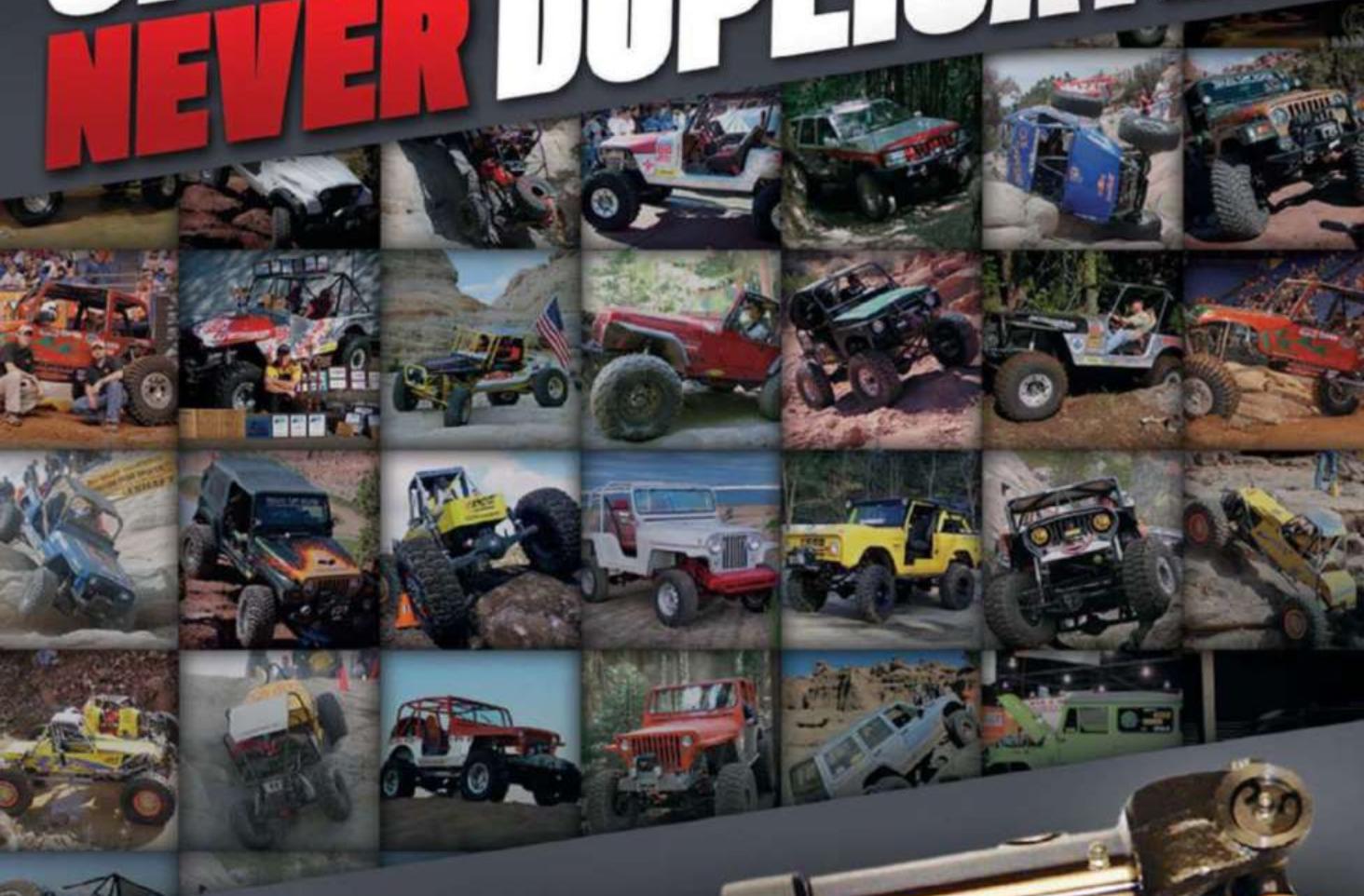
### Not His First One of These

Bill Adelmann of Temecula, California, is an experienced wheeler—and an experienced roller. He took down his Nissan Pathfinder long before his '00 TJ did this on Sledge Hammer in Johnson Valley, California. As he recapped, "My spotter started giving me directions, and as the hood line covered him, I thought (incorrectly) I still could hear his directions over the engine/tire noise, so I kept trying to 'crawl up. The rapidly approaching rock wall on the left caught me by surprise (yes, it did jump out at me from nowhere!), and all I had the chance to do was yell at the kids in the back, 'Rollover!'" As it turns out, "We always start our 4x4 runs with rollover drills. They responded automatically by keeping their heads down and arms in." ☀

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